

A Hundred Yeras  
OF  
The Bengali Press  
BEING

*A history of the Bengali newspapers  
from their inception to the  
present day*

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A HUNDRED YEARS OF THE BENGALI PRESS  
(FIRST PERIOD 1816-1820)

"*The newspaper is the chronicle of civilisation—the common reservoir into which every stream pours its living waters, at which every man may come to drink.*"—*Bulwer Lytton*.

ONE of the saddest and strangest facts in the history of the Bengali Press, is the utter absence of any systematic attempt to chronicle its varied activities. Though more than a hundred years have rolled away since the first Bengali newspaper saw the light, no interesting history is there to arrest the attention of the learned scholar. Bengali literature is fortunate in having captured the historical scholarship of men of the country of the type of the late Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, Ramgati Nayratna and Mr. Dinesh Chunder Sen ; but with the history of the Bengali Press it is otherwise. A solitary article appeared on the subject about 78 years ago in 1850 in the *Calcutta Review*. The writer of the article in question displayed not only his

love for the Bengali Press and consequently his deep scholarship in the Indian tongue, but also his impartial judgment and high faith in the future destiny of the Vernacular Press.

Without the advent of able and successful writers, the literature of a nation cannot improve. The genius and extraordinary capability of great writers also give rise to many newspapers and periodicals. Able writers alone can accelerate the progress of the Press. The periodical in England saw its birth shortly after the golden age of literature—the Elizabethan Age. When the field of literature was crowded with the best intellect of the country, a healthy Press grew up under intellects like those of Joseph Addison. The *Spectator*—the first daily paper—had a most celebrated and successful career under the guidance of Addison and Steele. Encouraged by such a worthy example, the *Guardian* and the *Freeholder* were started. Men like Hawkesworth, Chesterfield, and Horace Walpole identified themselves with journalism and won repute as writers. Dr. Johnson, who attempted everything, founded and edited two periodicals—the

*Idler* and the *Rambler*. Prompted by the struggle with which the name of John Wilkes and the author of the *Letters of Junius* are connected, the Press soon claimed and secured the right of criticising the actions of Government. A taste for literary criticism gave birth to the famous *Edinburgh Review* under Jeffrey and Sidney Smith ; and so on with other branches of knowledge. In the glorious age of French literature, under Louis XIV, the French Press first became a vital force in the national life, and it still looms large in all the great activities of that people.

Different, however, are the circumstances under which the Bengali Press flourishes. The Augustan Age in Bengali literature has not yet fully dawned. Few and limited are the resources of its literature. Cultured men in a far-off age may have taken delight in reading the few books available, which included the Vaishnava lyrics of Vidyapati, Chandidas, and the immortal works of Kritibas, Kasiramdas, Ram Prasad and Bharatchandra. These were the few books from which the men of the time drank deep and in

which they took pride; but the Press as an integral factor in the history of Bengal was still unknown.

At last, in came the band of missionaries. To spread the message of Christ was their chief mission; and actuated by such high motives, they did a unique service to Bengal and the Bengalis. To popularise the doctrines of Christianity, they began in right earnest, to study the vernaculars of the people. To make the new religion intelligible to the people, addresses in their own language were necessary. This gave rise to the Scriptures in Bengali. It was also through the great genius of Carey that the first press was established in Serampore. From this press issued out those books which claim to be the pioneers of their kind, not only in Bengal but also in India.

This new spirit was also responsible for the conception of newspapers in Bengali. Though numerous books came out of the missionary press at Serampore, though schools were established for imparting education in Bengali, still no great change came over the educated classes.

Despite, however, of the indifference of the respectable Bengalis, the Bengali Press, "which was destined to have a mighty influence hereafter in this country," came into being.

"The first Bengali newspaper," observed the Revd. James Long in the *Calcutta Review* 1850, "that broke in on the slumber of ages and roused the native from the torpor of selfishness, was the *Darpan* of Serampore, which began its career on the 23rd of May 1818." We are sorry, we cannot give the place of honour to the *Darpan* of the missionaries of Serampore, though we do not in any way desire to underestimate its services. The veteran missionaries might have taken the lead in printing books for the Bengalis, but they were not the first to inaugurate a journal in Bengali. That honour is due to a Bengali Brahmin—Gangadhar Bhattacharji. He started in 1816—just two years before the missionaries of Serampore—the *Bengal Gazette*, which was the first Indian newspaper published in any Indian vernacular because the *Bombay Samachar* followed as late as 1822. Thus we see that in the field of Bengali journalism, no foreigner

took the lead, but the people themselves. It was not the example of the missionaries which animated the Bengalis to start a newspaper. The influence of the English Press was already existing in Bengal, of *Hicky's Gazette*, *The India Gazette*, *The Bengal Harkaru*, *The Calcutta Gazette* and other such publications.

*The Bengal Gazette* (1816).

The first Bengali paper published, the *Bengal Gazette*, was edited by Gangadhar Bhattacharji of Calcutta. It saw the light in 1816. Unfortunately it survived only for a short year. It is rather surprising to note that although a pioneer it appeared every month with illustrations. It contained among other things the stories of *Vidyasundar* and *Vetal Panchavinsati* from the pen of the able editor.

*The Diggarsan* (1818).

Two years later, in March 1818, the missionaries of Serampore brought out the *Digdarsan*. It was also a monthly. Happily, the zeal of the messengers of Christ kept it up for a longer period than its immediate predecessor.

It lasted for two years and two months and had in all 26 issues. Thus the number of copies printed altogether amounted to 10,676, that is for each issue it had 410 copies on an average. In the beginning of the history of the Press in Bengal, the numbers printed are, by no means, disappointing.

*The Samachar Darpan* (1818).

On the 23rd May 1818, the *Samachar Darpan* of Serampore first saw the light. The Marquis of Hastings, was then ruling the destinies of India, as Governor-General of the Honourable East India Company. He was not afraid of the rise of this fourth estate, this new force which sought to offer free criticism of the actions of the Government. He gave every aid to the *Darpan*, and 'on the publication of the first number wrote a letter in his own hand to the editor (a singular honour for the editor of a vernacular paper) expressing his entire approval of the paper.' The Marquis of Hastings took it into the Council and allowed it to be circulated at one-fourth of the ordinary postage. The Government also freely subscribed for a

considerable number of copies. About the same period the Calcutta School Book Society was formed. Thousands of Natives began to learn the English language, and there was every sign of national education struggling to be born.

The rapid growth and development of the Press in every country depends largely on the support it receives from the authorities. Fortunately for the Bengali Press, it early received the strong support of the Marquis of Hastings, who gave every kind of concession to the *Samachar Darpan*. It exerted an influence over the vast population of Bengal, and was an important factor in the national life of Bengal. It was the only bond which bound together the people of Bengal, who were divided and sub-divided by so many religions and castes. This was the channel through which political ideas and thoughts generated into the country. "When we consider," says a writer, "the amount of historical, political and geographical information that the *Darpan*, along with other Bengali papers, poured in on the Hindu mind, which previously seldom extended its range of inquiry beyond the affairs of the Parganah, we

must assign a very prominent position to the native newspapers, and to the *Darpan* in particular, in having roused the adult mind from its long-continued state of apathy."

It will be interesting to consider the line in which the vernacular newspapers were conducted. The style of the *Darpan* was simple. The information published in it, was not only local, but embraced Indian and foreign news as well. Though the paper was conducted by missionaries, yet it avoided all religious controversy. The paper must have roused much enthusiasm among the people, because, from the first, correspondence began to pour in. This correspondence began to throw a flood of light on the condition of the country. They brought forward to the notice of the Government the legitimate grievances of the people and generally voiced the ambitions and aspirations of the country at large. Thus the Bengali Press helped in a great way to spread political knowledge among the masses of the country. The service rendered by the *Darpan* in the early days, has been well summarised in a few sentences by the Revd. James Long. "The officers of Government," observed the rever-

rend gentleman, "felt it (*i.e.* the *Samachar Darpan*) as a check on their misconduct and dreaded its exposures. It was the only channel of information to the Natives in the interior, and has in its day done some service to Government by counteracting unfavourable rumours and strengthening the principle of loyalty."

There has been an attempt in some direction to denounce the Vernacular Press as disloyal and revolutionary, but here is a testimony, which proves that even the early Bengali Press helped the Government in "strengthening the principal of loyalty." Even the Report of Administration by the Bengal Government for 1917, frankly states that 'the tone of the Bengali Press is loyal.' It must not be lost sight of that even in the troublesome days of the Sepoy Mutiny, when the whole country was up against British authority, the Bengali Press continued to be loyal, without lending any help to the revolutionary party, supporting firmly the British Government, and many a journal, like the *Subodhini*, sang songs of victory for the British, *Jaya Britisher Jaya*.

Next, the *Sambad Kaumadi* entered the ~~field~~. It was published in 1819. This paper was edited by the great Raja Ram Mohun Roy with the help of Bhowanicharan Banerjee. To appreciate the work accomplished by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, it is necessary to consider briefly the circumstances of the time. Raja Ram Mohun had to work against the prevailing ignorance of Hindu society. He was moved at the amazing practice of idolatry amongst the Hindus. He was the first man in the last century to realise that this grossness of society must be combated before any national improvement could be instituted. With a heart, full of courage and perseverance, he commenced his noble struggles against the degraded forms of Hinduism, which ultimately gave birth to Brahmoism. With this noble object in view, he took up the charge of the *Sambad Kaumadi* and wrote a series of strong articles severely criticising Hindu society. This gave rise to a strong party of opposition from among the orthodox Hindus. While the followers of Raja Ram Mohun Roy founded their Samaj, the orthodox Hindus established

a Dharma Sabha to counteract the influences of the Brahmo Samaj. The Hindus soon launched a new paper, named the *Samachar Chandrika*. We quote below an opinion as to the manner in which the Bengali editors of those early days are said to have conducted themselves. It may be added that the testimony comes from the Revd. James Long upon whose opinion every credit can be placed. "We must say this," he writes, "that there has been far less of personality, railing against Government, scandal and scurrilous remarks in the Bengali Press of Calcutta than there has been in the Calcutta English journals."

In our attempt to trace the early history of the Bengali Press, we are faced with the fact, that religious controversy helped in a great way the growth of the Bengali Press. Though the *Samachar* avoided all forms of religious controversy, yet such matters were soon taken up by its immediate successors, the *Kaumudi* and *Chandrika* the latter of which was established in 1823.

## SECOND PERIOD (1821—1830)

### *Sambad Kaumadi (1819—1840)*

It must be said to the credit of Bengali journalism, which was still in its infancy, that it helped to mould Bengali prose and make it the finished product it is to-day. The bulk of the books written before, was in poetry ; and prose was rarely used in writing except for a few books meant for the use of Civilian students of Fort William College. Raja Ram Mohun Roy, in his paper *Kaumadi* and other pamphlets, employed Bengali prose as the vehicle for his attacks against Hindu Society. "In Bengal," says R. W. Fraser in his Literary History of India, " Ram Mohun Roy used the vernacular Bengali for his prose writings, commencing in 1790, with his early essay against idolatry ; but neither in his nor in his later writings on the 'Vedanta,' in his translations of the 'Upanishads,' and his subsequent polemics on the subject of widow burning, did the language show any adaptability for becoming a medium,

to express his views so clearly and gracefully, as he was enabled to express them in his Sanskrit and English writings." Still he improved considerably the Bengali prose of his day and instilled a living spirit into it. "He showed that the vernaculars were capable of being used for active purposes, for before his time, they had been merely used for poetic effusions."

Though Ram Mohun Roy started the *Kaumudi*, he tried to keep himself in the background, and the paper was conducted in the name of Bhawanicharan Banerjee. This paper was printed at the Sanskrit Press. It dealt with all the important questions of Indian life. In the very first number of the journal, he demanded free primary education for the country, which is still withheld by those in authority. He concluded the article with an appropriate little story. In the second number he spoke of the advantages of the Press, and demanded the raising of the age-limit of minors. Among other things this well-conducted journal advocated female education.

and an improved form of medical treatment for Indians. The following Sanskrit verse served as the motto of this paper:—

“*Darpana Badanam bhuti, Dipana nikatasthitam,  
Rabina bhubanam taptam, Kamudya sitalam jagat.*”

The most momentous question, however, which this paper took up, and which caused the separation of the editor's friends, was, that of the abolition of *Sati*, i.e., the burning of the widows in the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands. It was in vogue to such a horrible extent, that the practice roused the indignation not only of the European officials, but also of cultured men of the community, men like Ram Mohun Roy took a prominent part in the agitation against *Sati*, even nine years before the journal was started. In this journal he wrote many strong articles and reprinted his pamphlet against the practice. The Government were glad at the help he was affording them in the matter. The Raja did valuable service to the people by publishing his diatribe for the second time.

His hostile attitude towards *Sati* alienated his friend and assistant Bhawanicharan

Banerjee, who left the *Kaumadi* in its infancy, when it was only 4 years old and started, with the help of his orthodox Hindu friends, another journal, called the *Samachar Chandrika*. Ram Mohun Roy continued to edit his journal up till 1840, thus the paper had a prolonged career of 21 years.

The Revd. James Long speaks of another Bengali paper, started by Ram Mohun Roy. It was the *Brahmanical Magazine* launched in 1821. "Its career was rapid, fiery, meteoric, and both from want of solid substance, and through excess of inflammation, it soon exploded and disappeared." It contained vehement attacks on the missionaries of the time.

### *Samachar Chandrika (1821).*

A difference of opinion between colleagues, gave birth to a new journal. Backed by the 'Dharma Sabha' of the orthodox Hindu community, Bhawanicharan Banerjee took the helm of this new venture. "The *Chandrika*," says the Revd. James Long, "was started in 1821. It has ever proved to be the consistent advocate of thorough-going Hindu orthodoxy, and has been the enthusiastic friend of *Dharma Sabha*." It was

thus designed to counteract the influence of *Kaumadi*, which had the support of the Brahmo Samaj. Two sects of the one community thus began to rail and abuse each other. Happily they did not go beyond journalistic bounds.

One of the characteristics of the Bengali journals, is their shortness of life, for yet Bengali journalism was not a paying concern, it was more the work of love and patriotism. The paper had mostly a circulation of 300 to 400 copies, and it was not possible for the majority of them to keep on for a lengthened period, for voluntary effort soon flags. A few papers like the *Kaumadi* and *Chandrika* were blessed with a long duration of life but these were exceptions. "The *Chandrika* in marked contrast," says the Revd. James Long in 1850, "with many of its contemporaries, is now (1850) in the 29<sup>th</sup> year of its existence, while the generality of native papers have their short day and popularity, and then burst like a bubble on the stream." The *Chandrika* was published twice weekly.

*The Timirnasak* (1823), *the Bangadut* (1825)

The next paper which made its appearance in the field was the *Timirnasak*. It literally

means the “Destroyer of Darkness.” We have, however, no means to ascertain how far this journal acted up to its motto in dispelling the ignorance of the country. It was first published in 1823. Its editor was Krishna Mohun Das.

The *Bangadut* appeared first on Sunday the 10th of May 1825. The date of publication was, however, soon changed in the second number from Sunday to Saturday. This was the first paper conducted in two languages, at the same time, *viz.*, Bengali and Persian, “as the latter would be understood by the *Mahajans* of Barabazar.” There followed other papers, which were conducted in two or three different languages. “The *Timirnasak* was started under the management of R. Martin, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosanakumar Tagore and Raja Ram Mohun Roy.” The duty of editing was entrusted with Nil Ratan Halder, formerly a Dewan of the Salt Board.

There occurred at this time a petty quarrel between the *Bangadut* and another Bengali paper, when Mr. Marshman of the *Friend of India* intervened. At this the *Bangadut* remarked

impertinently : " This quarrel is amongst ourselves, how is it that this Feringhi comes and interferes ? " This paper the *Bangadut* lasted for 14 years till 1839, being established in the year 1825.

*The Sambad Sudhakar* (1830), *the Sambad Probhakar* (1830)

The year 1830 may be regarded as a red letter day in the history of Bengali journalism. It saw the birth of a paper, which greatly improved the tone and ideal of the Press in Bengal. It was rather a new departure in the field of journalism. This was effected not by so much by the *Sambad Sudhakar*, as by the *Sambad Probhakar*. Both these papers were started in 1830, the former under the editorship of Prem Chand Roy.

What was the work accomplished by the *Sambad Probhakar*? " The work," says Mr. R. W. Frazer, " of perfecting the use of Bengali for literary purposes was carried on by Isvar Chandra Gupta, who started the monthly *Sambad Probhakar* in 1830, a journal, in which his own poetry, not of a very high order, as well as his prose translations from the Sanskrit appeared."

This journal was first started by Isvar Chandra Gupta with the help and encouragement of Jogendra Mohun Tagore in 1830. As long as he lived Jogendra Mohun subsidised this paper and it continued to flourish mainly through his help. Born in 1809, Isvar Chandra early displayed a taste for versification, and in this journal he found a vehicle for his numerous prose and poetical compositions. His paper soon made a mark in journalistic circles, and was eagerly sought for by all classes of people. Unfortunately, the career of this popular paper was soon cut short by the ill-timed death of the donor in 1832. The eventful career of this paper soon came to a stop, as means were insufficient to carry it on.

Four years later in 1836 with redoubled energy Isvar Chandra Gupta re-started the *Probhakar*. It was published thrice a week. The venture proved so successful that three years later in 1839, he brought it out in a new garb, as a daily paper. It had amongst its subscribers the leading men of the country. What was the influence exerted by this journal ? "For a time," wrote Mr. R. C. Dutt, "his (Isvar

Chandra Gupta's) influence knew no bounds; the *Probhakar* was eagerly sought for every where, and Isvar Gupta's witty and flowing verse was learned by rôle by a large class of readers. Writers of great talent and merit served their apprenticeship under Isvar Chandra in the *Probhakar* and theatrical companies vied with each other in honouring the poet, while light, witty, pointed and satirical songs and poetry were sought and intensely admired." His paper is still remembered for the numerous satirical compositions from his able pen. He was not blind to the defects and abuses of society and vigorously attacked the existing problems. Many committed his satire on female education to memory in which he exposed the evils of unsound education to Hindu ladies.

Meanwhile he had started two other periodicals, which entered into fierce literary duels with other literary magnates of the time: Fourteen years later, in 1853, he began to publish it as a regular monthly. It commanded immense popularity. It was at this time that Isvar Chandra thought of collecting the extant

works of the great poets of ancient Bengal, namely, of Ramprosad, Bharatchandra, Rāmuidhi, Haru Thakur and others. For this purpose he travelled extensively throughout Bengal and after ten long years of industry and research he began to publish them in his journal. Thus it has been only through his indefatigable efforts that the works of Ramprosad and Bharatchandra have come down to us in printed forms, otherwise they would have been long forgotten and might have been lost to us altogether.

Many great writers of the past served their apprenticeship under him in the *Probhakar*. Particular mention may be made of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the reputed novelist, Dina-bandhu Mittra, the father of the Bengali drama, and Dwarkanath Adhicari. He appreciated the literary skill of these rising authors and as such encouraged them by publishing their poems in his journal. Bankim Chandra, at first, tried his hand at composing poems through his guidance, but soon after, at the advice of his *Guru*, turned to the writing of prose in which he soon became the greatest of living writers of the time,

*The Sambad Shudhakar (1830)*

The year 1830 not only saw the birth of the *Probhakar* but also of the *Sambad Sudhakar*, its date of origin is noted by Mr. Dutt as the year 1830. This proposition is supported by the *Christian Observer* of Calcutta. Unfortunately the details as to its history are very meagre. Only this is ascertainable that the editor of this paper was Premchand Ray—of whose antecedents we are in the dark. It appeared every week and its duration was eleven years.

*The Sambad Ratnakar (1830)*

This was the last periodical with whose account the year 1830 closes. The *Ratnakar* used to cater for the pleasure of the public every week. From the *Englishman* of 1840 it is known that the editorial charge and direction was placed on Brajamohon Ray. His enthusiasm only enabled him to perform his editorial duties for a single year, after which the paper was closed. It is maintained by some that the paper did real justice to its name. As its name implies, it was filled with bright gems in the field of literature.

### THIRD PERIOD [1831-1840]

THE *Probhakar* of Isvar Gupta may be described as one of the landmarks in the history of the Bengali Press. Founded in the early thirties of the last century, it continued for a long while in its career educating the public of Bengal. Many years after it was regarded as the model of the Vernacular Press. After Isvar Gupta, the editorial charge was taken over by Ram Chandra Gupta, and later on by Gopal Chandra Mukerjee. No less than six papers appeared in the year 1831. First came the *Anubadica*, it was only a translation of the *Reformer*. It was followed by the *Samachar Sabha Rajendra*, whose editor was a Mahomedan gentleman, Maulavi Ali Mollah. This was the first instance, where a Mussulman gentleman had taken to journalism. For the convenience of the Persian reading-public, it was published, both in Bengali and Persian. It was a weekly and survived up to the year 1840.

*The Jananeswan (1831)*

The above journal was founded by students of the Hindu College. The old Hindu College boys played an important part in the history of the country. Many other journals were circulated by them. It must be said to the credit of this paper that for 13 years it was distributed free among the educated classes of Bengal. The finance came from Dakshinaranjan Mukerjee, who afterwards was made a Rajah and who inherited property worth a lakh of rupees from his maternal grandfather Surja Kumar Tagore. Dakshinaranjan Babu ably edited the paper with the help of his friend Rasik Krishna Mullick. At first it appeared only in Bengali but after the first year it began to appear both in English and Bengali. Prominent writers like Ram Gopal Ghose, Ram Chandra Mitter, Govinda Chandra Basak and Tarini Bannerjee, willingly contributed to it. It had a liberal policy and contained many articles against the Hindu religion and the abuses of it. These outpourings on the

superstitions and prejudices of the Hindus were the outcome of the teaching of the great master-mind of the young Eurasian teacher, Henri Louis Vivian Derozio.

When in 1835, Sir Charles (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe tried to pass his great Bill on the liberty of the Press, many officials were against such a beneficial change. Sir Charles Metcalfe, however, was firm and declared strongly : "Freedom of public discussion, which is nothing more than the freedom of speaking aloud, is a right belonging to the people which no government has a right to withhold."

The *Jananeswan* strongly supported the Bill, and when it was carried into an Act, a public meeting was arranged in the Calcutta Town Hall to present an address to Sir Charles Metcalfe. On this occasion almost all the editors of English and vernacular papers joined hands in praising the Liberator of the Press. The editor of *Jananeswan* who was described an eminent *pundit* said at the meeting : "As

it appears that the meeting is unanimous in its opinion as to the freedom of the Press, allow me to explain, that the reason for presenting myself is because I consider that the proposed law is one of the greatest importance to the native community on whose behalf I rise to express my sentiments. Sir Charles Metcalfe certainly deserves all the thanks that we are able to bestow on him, and I concur with Mr. Turton, that the liberty, we require, is not limited but absolute liberty under responsibility. Let the offender be amenable to the law, and if he deserves punishment, a court of justice is the tribunal to inflict it. I am sorry that we have some cause of complaint against Lord William Bentinck, for not having passed the proposed law. It was his duty according to his oath, if he thought the present law good, to enforce it, if not, to repeal it. The proposed law is well calculated to promote the benefit of the country ; for no country so much needs a free Press as that whose Government is despotic."

The *Janmeswan* had the following gentlemen as editors of the paper. The first editor was Tarak Chandra Basu, from 1831 to the 21st September 1835. The second editor was Rasik Krishna Mullick, from the 22nd September 1835 to the 9th July 1837. The third editor was Dakshinaranjan Mukerjee, from the 10th July 1837 to 1839. The fourth editor was Ram Gopal Ghosh from November 1839 to 1840.

### *The Sambad Sara Sanghra (1831)*

This was another paper conducted in two languages—Bengali and Persian. Babu Benimadhab De was its editor. From the name, we presume, it tried to give the summary of all the information contained in the then surviving journals. It is difficult to say how long it lasted, perhaps, it continued, the latest, up to 1840.

### *The Sukharar (1831)*

Details as to the existence and duration and the work done by this paper are sadly lacking. It is stated only in a descriptive catalogue of Bengali books by the Revd. James Long that it flourished in 1831.

*The Anubadika (1831)*

This paper was founded by Prasanna Kumar Tagore. It was intended to be the vernacular version of his *Reformer*. Prasanna Kumar's generosity managed to maintain it for some time. For nine long years it appeared for the benefit of the public. It ceased after 1840.

*The Sambad Ratnavali (1832)*

This periodical saw the light on the 24th July 1832. Happily, it was financed by Gogganath Prasad Mullick, a very rich person of Mechua Bazar. From the account published by the *Prabhakar*, we learn that at first its nominal editor was Mahesh Chandra Pal, who, however, was not gifted with a facile pen, a thing most essential in an editor. The real editor of the paper, therefore, was Isvar Gupta of *Prabhakar* fame. Under him the paper had a prosperous career and it soon became a popular journal. When, however, Isvar Gupta relinquished the charge, Raj Narayan Bhattacharya was appointed in his place. He was formerly the Secretary of the Rangpur

Landholders' Association. The paper lasted only for four years, its career terminating in 1836.

*The Satyavadi (1835)*

No newspaper appeared in the years 1833 and 1834. The year 1835 however ushered forth the *Satyavadi*. This is another instance of a newspaper being published in two languages, English and Bengali. We cannot determine who were the editors, or how long it continued.

In 1835 Sir Charles Metcalfe the then Governor-General for India granted for India the liberty of the Press. His name will ever remain great in the opinions of all Indians. He also founded the Calcutta Public Library now called after him the Metcalfe Library.

*The Sambad Purna Chandraodaya (1835)*

The help and paternal care of rich people brought out this journal. The rich men in question, who ungrudgingly offered their wealth and leisure for this journalistic adventure, were Adyaitya Charan Addy and Udyo Charan Addy. It was published at the Purna Chandra Press, which was long situated in Amratola Street.

The paper first began as a fortnightly in 1835. The then editor was Harachandra Banerjee, who after surviving for two years became a teacher in the Dacca College. He had to relinquish his charge and made it over in 1838 to one of the proprietors, Udyo Charan Addy. From a fortnightly, it was transformed into a tri-weekly in 1840, when the incumbent secured a post in the Excise Department. He, in his turn, gave overcharge to his colleague and supporter Adyaitya Charan Addy. True to his duty, and like a genuine patriot he struggled on with his paper till 1873, when his soul passed away, he having patiently borne his charge for 31 years. So long and patient a struggle is a rather uncommon thing in the field of the Bengali journalism. From 1845, the paper became a daily one. After the passing away of Adyaitya Charan Addy, the editorial charge was taken over by Govinda Charan Addy in 1872. From an account of the Bengali Press, published in the *Englishman* of 1840, we learn that at that time this paper had 833 subscribers. The annual subscription

was Rs. 3 only. The editorial comments in the paper were dignified and worthy of high praise. In 1852 the paper increased its rate of subscription to Rs. 8 a year.

*The Samad Sindhu (1835).*

The above paper was owned and edited by Kalisankar Dutt. His enthusiasm continued for five years after which the paper ceased to exist. Details about this paper are also sadly lacking.

*The Dibakar (1837).*

The name of this journal which implies "*The Sun*," was unlike the sun, for it appeared to the gaze of the public only once a week. This paper was launched by Ganganarayan Basu. Its duration was only for three short years, after which its publication was discontinued.

*The Sambad Saudamini (1838)*

This paper was fashioned after the model of the *Darpan*. It was supported by the Hindu Benevolent Institution. It was, however, fathered by Kalachand Dutt and his friends, who also carried out the editorial duties. It

cannot safely be ascertained how many subscribers it had at the beginning, but in 1840, it appeared to have only 78 subscribers in the town and two outside it; so the career of this journal could not have been long. It had a premature death after a two years' existence.

*The Samad Gunakar (1838)*

We are unable to furnish many details about this paper as of a few others which were little cared for at the time. The *Sambad Gunakar* was started by Girish Chandra Basu, a former student of the Hindu College. Its duration could not have been more than two years.

*The Sambad Mritunjaya (1838).*

The name indicated that this paper would even conquer death, but unfortunately it fell a very easy prey to the monster. It was edited by Parbati Charan Nag. The only characteristic of this paper worth mentioning is that it was conducted solely in poetry, but the form of poetry it possessed gave very little proof of real genius.

*The Bangadut, New Series (1839).*

Fifteen years before, the *Bangadut*, the first of the name, appeared before the public, this paper was the *Bangadut* of a new series entirely. The object and tone of both the papers were the same and both were weekly. The editor of the new paper was Rajnarayan Sen, who used to contribute handsomely to its upkeep and maintenance as well. In 1840, the number of its subscribers amounted to fifty only. The annual subscription was six rupees. We hear of its existence even in 1850.

*The Arunadoya (1839).*

This paper was launched and managed by Rajnarayan Mukherjee, though this journal had a short career of six months, yet in this brief period, it drew a great deal of public attention. Its subscribers numbered 570, while the mofussil counted 70. Its subscription was twelve rupees only.

*The Samad Bhaskar (1839).*

There are very few literate men and women in Bengal who even to this day are not

unacquainted with the historic fight between the *Prabhakar* and the *Bhaskar*. As the former had a reputation for simple humourous poetry, so the latter had for chaste prose. The etymological meaning of both the terms is "The Sun," yet in spite of this apparent similarity, both could not help reviling each other. The first editor of the *Bhaskar* was Srinath Roy, from 1839 to 1840. He was succeeded by Gaurisankar Tarkabagish, the well-known antagonist of Isvar Gupta of *Prabhakar* fame. He was popularly known as Gurlgura Bhattacharjee for his short stature. A rather interesting episode took place during the incumbency of the first editor. Most people know how Hicky of the *Bengal Gazette* fame was threatened with the loss of his life, but no one in India ever heard of the abduction of an editor. In the present case, the editor wrote a few strong comments in the *Bhaskar* of December 1839 against Rajnarayan Rai, the Rajah of Andul. It was hinted in the notes that the Raja had forced two Brahmins of high caste to marry two women of lower caste. On the 13th of January 1840,

as the editor was entering a carriage near Pataldanga Road, the Rajah's men gagged his mouth and carried him off to Andul, near Howrah. When, however, a petition was filed before the Supreme Court for a Habeas Corpus Writ, the prisoner was removed to a distant place. On the 14th January, Mr. Turton, the then Advocate-General, prayed for the Writ, whereupon on the 15th Mr. Prinsep on behalf of the Rajah stated that the case was beyond the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. It was then pointed out that as the editor was taken away from Calcutta and as the Rajah had a house in Calcutta, the court could claim jurisdiction. The case subsequently came up before the Chief Justice Sir Edward Ryan and Sir H. W. Setton and lasted for four days. On the last day, the 20th of March, the Rajah was fined only one thousand rupees, having escaped the rigours of imprisonment.

A literary fight came up when Gaurisanker Bhattacharjee was the editor. He was at first a friend of Raja Ram Mohun Ray, whom he greatly helped in the *Sati* question.

When a meeting of the learned *pundits* took place in Government House, Gaurisanker took part in it. His short stature, however, drew forth laughter from a few ladies present. At this the Governor-General was reported to have said : "Please do not laugh at a woman's advocate." The remark was very appropriate as Gaurisanker was pleading for the protection of women against the cruel fate of *Sati*.

Gaurisanker Bhattacharjee was also a friend of his outwardly professed opponent Isvar Gupta. In 1856 Isvar Gupta thus wrote of him in the *Prabhakar*: "The famous Pundit Babu Gaurisanker helped us much before, but for want of time, he cannot at present." Although there lasted for some time a duel of words, there was no alienation of friendship. This literary fight began from the year 1857, when both of them launched two fresh papers. One used to write strongly against the other in his paper and a rejoinder invariably appeared in the paper attacked. This fight soon reached a climax and all journalistic rules, as well as laws of morality, were violated. Babu Rajnarayan Bose in his

book on Bengali Literature has justly censured the manner in which this fight was carried on at the time. Still, as stated before, this professed antagonism never seemed to dampen the friendship of the two. When Tarkabagish fell seriously ill his friend went to see him often. By a stroke of fortune, when Isvar Chandra was on his death-bed, his friend Tarkabagish was also laid up with a serious ailment. The death of Isvar Chandra came as a blow to Gaurisanker and on his sick-bed he wrote in the *Bhaskar* that if he survived he would unravel the mystery which surrounded his dead friend, but if unfortunately he should perish, their life-histories could not but remain in darkness. Fate intervened and a few days after Tarkabagish also passed away and the life-histories of the two great remain unknown to this day.

After November 1857, the editorial charge of the *Bhaskar* was taken over by Khettranath Bhattacharya, who breathed his last only recently, in 1918. At first its subscription was rupees twelve a year, but in 1855 it was reduced to eight rupees only. His paper had a large

circulation and had subscribers even in the Punjab and in England.

Maharajah Kamal Krishna Deb was a valued and regular contributor to it, as is testified from the following quotation: "The two Bengali newspapers the *Gunakar* and the *Bhaskar* which were conducted under his auspices were entirely written by him (Maharajah Kamal Krishna Deb Bahadur of Sovabazar) and he became a good Bengali writer." It may be mentioned here that the Deb family of Sovabazar, subsequently with their well-known liberality, financed this journal for a long time.

### *The Sambad Rasaraj (1839)*

The name of the two brother journalists, Iavar Gupta and Gaurisankar Tarkabagish, will remain ever green in the history of Bengali journalism. They helped in a great way towards the establishment of the Vernacular Press in Bengal. They were responsible for the starting of not one paper, but of two and even more. As pointed out before, Tarkabagish was the editor of the *Bhaskar*, but soon after he launched a journal called the *Sambad*

*Rasaraj.* It entered into a contest with Isvar Gupta's paper *Pasanda Piran*. One Kali Kanta Ganguly gladly lent his assistance to Tarkabagish in conducting the new venture. It used to appear twice every week. The annual subscription was four rupees and annas four only.

Misfortune, however, soon checked all hope of future success. Two defamation cases simultaneously were filed against the popular editor. The first of these was brought by Raja Krishna Nath Ray of Kasimbazar for publishing a false charge against his wife, Rani Swarnamai. The case came up in due time before Sir John Peter Grant, Mr. Seath and Mr. Morton appeared on the side of Rani, while the editor's case was taken up by Messrs. Hume, Lang and Theobold. When the case was finally decided, the editor was ordered to undergo imprisonment for six months and to pay a fine of five hundred rupees. No sooner had the case been decided, then another suit was filed against the editor by Raj Narsinha Ray. The Judge decided that the sentence of this case should be enforced as soon as the prisoner had

served the first term of imprisonment. This effectively hindered the success of the paper; which had a circulation of 150 copies and lasted till 1850.

*The Murshidabad Patrika (1840)*

The year 1840 is memorable in the annals of the Bengali Press, for it saw the birth of the first paper from the mofussil. In the early forties of the last century, it was by no means easy to publish a journal from the mofussil, where less opportunities presented themselves for enterprising organisers. This adds to the credit of the promoters of this new adventure. A rich Zemindar of the locality liberally helped the *Patrika*, which, however, had a short existence.

*The Bengal Government Gazette (1840)*

As pointed out before, Serampore, which can boast itself as the birth-place of the second paper in Bengali, also saw the birth of several other well-known papers; one of these was the *Bengal Government Gazette*. It was a demi-official paper to keep the public in touch with

official views. This gazette was another instance where both English and Bengali were employed as mediums of instruction. By this time, the authorities realised what a great power the Press might be in the hands of the officials. The first incumbent of this paper was John C. Marshman who conducted the paper ably for thirteen years till 1853. Many take him for the same Mr. Marshman of the Serampore College, but this is a mistake. He was the son of the Revd. Joshua Marshman and was different from the colleague of Carey and Ward. John Marshman was succeeded by the Revd. John Robinson in 1853. He remained in charge for no less than twenty-six years, retiring in 1879. After him came two prominent Bengali editors. The first was Babu Rajkrishna Mukherjee, M.A., B.L. He was an able writer and his comments and criticism found popular favour. Born in the village of Nadia, he served as Professor in the Presidency College and other institutions. He was also for some time Bengali translator to the Bengal Government with a pay of Rs. 700. He knew not only Sanskrit and English, but also Urdu, Uriya, French,

German, Latin, Pali and Persian. He was succeeded in 1886 by Chandra Nath Basu, M.A., B.L., a gifted writer in Bengali. A friend of Bankim Chandra, his articles gave signs of much originality. He also served as Librarian of the Bengal Government Library. This gazette not only contained information, but contained also Government circulars and notices. It had a circulation of 1,500 copies and any one paying eight rupees a year received a copy regularly.

The year 1840 also witnessed the birth of the following papers: the *Sujan Ranjan*, the *Jannadipika*, the *Jannaodya*, and the *Janna Sindhu Taranga* of these the first was edited by Govinda Chandra Dutt and was published twice every week. The main object of this journal was openly to revile and criticise the *Sambad Rasaraj*. The *Dipika* was edited by Bhagabati Charan Chatterjee and appeared as a weekly paper. The last two journals were launched by persons connected with the Hindu College. The *Jannaodya* was started by Ram Chandra Mitter, who served as a vernacular

teacher in the Hindu College. The last one was edited by Rasik Krishna Mullick. Though a student of the Hindu College, he had a hand in the publication of another journal in conjunction with Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukerjee.

## FOURTH PERIOD (1841-1856)

THIS period may be termed the age of short-lived papers. It witnessed the birth of a host of papers, which were destined to live only for a short duration. We have not to go far to seek out the cause. In the first place, a reading public was still unknown in Bengal; of the seventy million men and women in Bengal, the majority were steeped in ignorance, as they are indeed, to this day. The percentage of the people who received an elementary education was lamentable. Of this only ten per cent. of the whole population was literate; of this small percentage of literate people again very few were in a position to buy the Bengali papers. Those who had the desire to read the papers had not the means to pay for them. Still the Bengali journals struggled on in their career to fulfil their mission. This lack of support from the people and chiefly the

educated told seriously against the growth of the Vernacular Press. This was markedly so in the early fifties of the last century, when before Bankim Chandra's time the educated Bengalis looked down upon the Bengali Press. Things, however, have moved rapidly since.

In 1841, only two new papers entered the field. They were the *Bharat Bandhu* and the *Nisakara*. The former meant "The Friend of India." It cannot, however, be properly ascertained that it was the Bengali version of the paper of the same name published from Serampore. The paper was edited by Shama Charan Banerjee and appeared every week. The editor of the latter was Nilkamal Das, who in the following year brought out another paper called the *Bhringadut*.

### *The Bengal Spectator (1842)*

Though this journal was not bestowed with a long life, yet it was destined to exert a great influence over the country. The *Bengal Spectator* endeavoured to follow the wake of its great English prototype. It was the organ

of the British Indian Society. The story of the origin of this Society is well worth recalling. After the death of Derozio, his pupils started the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge. All the leading men, including David Hare, Ram Gopal Ghose, Ramtanu Lahiri, and Peari Chandra Mitra, served in various capacities in the Committee. It was at one of the meetings of this Society held in the Hindu College Hall, that Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee read a paper on *The Present Condition of the East India Company's Courts of Judicature and Police under the Bengal Presidency.* Some people took great exception to the tone of the paper and Captain D. L. Richardson, Principal of Hindu College, was known to exclaim: "I cannot convert the College into a den of treason." The whole body thereafter left the place and started another Association for the discussion of political questions. In this connection it is interesting to recall what the *Bengal Hurkaru* said about this paper of the Rajah. "We have," it writes, "in vain sought for any proof of the charges of

disloyalty, ignorance and disaffection, which have been so profusely heaped upon the Baboo."

Driven from the Hindu College they started the British Indian Society, with Mr. George Thomson as President. Many regard George Thomson as the father of political meetings in India. Born of a poor family in Liverpool, a self-made man, he early became the editor of the *British India Advocate* and came out to Bengal at the invitation of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. The *Bengal Spectator* was started by Ram Gopal Ghose, the Demosthenes of India, in March 1842 and subsequently it began to represent the views and aspirations of the British Indian Society. Born and bred in Calcutta, Ram Gopal Ghose early acquired the habit of delivering lectures. He was also an able writer. His famous speeches on the *Indian Civil Service* and the *Black Bill* (the Bill in which an agitation was made that Europeans should not be tried by Indian judges) and the Nimtolla Ghat question (the agitation over the scheme to remove the Nimtolla Burning Ghat a little further down the South of the city,

it being a nuisance where it was,) are living testimonies of his power of oration, and are aptly compared by many to those of Burke in England. Piyari Chand Mittra took up subsequently the editorial charge of the paper and Dakshinaranjan Mukerjee was also its editor for some time. Ram Gopal always contributed thoughtful articles to the *Bengal Spectator*, which soon became a pillar of strength to the British Indian Society. It was conducted both in English and Bengali. From April 1812, the paper became a monthly. Three months had scarcely passed away, when it was brought out as a fortnightly. The organisers soon, however, found the necessity of transforming it into a weekly paper to give a more frequent expression to their views. After the coming of George Thomson and the establishment of the Society, the fame and power of this paper rapidly increased, George Thomson liberally helped the organisers with money and advice. After a year it was made out by some that they had an outstanding debt of Rs. 1,000 to meet. As the prospect of the journal was

far from bright, the organisers resolved to close the venture. The paper, accordingly ceased publication after November 1843. Each issue comprised eight pages.

*The Sambad Raja Rani and the Sarba-Rasa Ranjini (1840)*

The year 1844 saw the birth of two more newspapers; they were the *Sambad Raja Rani* and the *Sarba-Rasa Ranjini*. The former was under the charge of Girish Chandra Basu of *Dibakar* fame. The only noteworthy feature of this journal was its vulgarity. It used to take a great pleasure in reviling its opponents. The latter paper was far more refined and polished. Its contents comprised valued articles on morality, history and science. It added to the pleasure of the public only for two years.

*The Jagadudipak Bhaskar, the Martanda and the Samachar Janna Darpan (1846)*

No record of new papers in 1845 can be found out. The next year, 1846, witnessed the birth of three more papers. They were in

order of importance ; the *Jagadudipak Bhaskur*, the *Martanda*, and the *Samachar Janna Darpan*. The first paper was edited by a Mahomedan gentleman, Maulavi Bar Ali. The chief characteristic of this Moslem paper was that it was conducted in four different languages, English, Bengali, Hindi and Persian. There was no lack of papers written in two languages, but this was almost a Herculean venture and it did credit to the gentleman who was its head. From the beginning of the history of the Bengali Press, the following papers were noted as being edited in two different languages :—

- 1 *The Samachar Sabha Rajendra*,
- 2 *The Sambad Sara Sangraha*,
- 3 *The Jananeswan*,
- 4 *The Satyavadi*,
- 5 *The Sambad Saudamini*,
- 6 *The Bengal Government Gazette*,
- 7 *The Bengal Spectator*.

The *Samachar-Janna-Darpan* began its career in 1846. It was published from the Bhaskar Press and was considered as a help to the *Bhaskar* of Gaurisanker Tarkabagish. This

*Darpan* was edited by Umakanta Bhattacharjee. The rate of subscription was eight rupees a year. The *Darpan*'s career lasted till 1850, for a period of four years only.

*The Pasanda Piran (1847)*

Isvar Gupta, the renowned poet of *Prabhakar* fame, was responsible for more than three papers. In 1847, he brought out a fresh journal the *Pasanda Piran*. His wit found better scope in the pages of this journal. As has been pointed out by Mr. R. C. Dutt in his *Literature of Bengal* "writers of great talent and merit served their apprenticeship under Isvar Chandra in the *Prabhakar*," similarly round *Pasanda Piran* many gifted writers flocked. They included men like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dinabandhu Mittra and many others. Isvar Chandra always gladly offered to publish the early poetic attempts of these two great novelists and dramatists of Bengal. Writing later on of the poetic genius of Isvar Chandra, Bankim Babu stated, "Isvar Gupta is a poet, but of what kind? Poets

deal with what is beautiful and ideal. Why not with what is present to our eyes always and what is real? Are there no beauties in them? Certainly there are and Isvar Gupta belongs to that class of poets, who deal with the present state of the society. He is the poet of Bengali society. He is the rural poet of Bengal . . . . In short, Isvar Gupta is a realist as well as a satirist. That is the province in which he remains unchallenged in the field of Bengali literature."

### *The Kaustavakiran (1848)*

Early in 1848 the *Kaustavakiran* made its appearance. The name implies a precious gem placed in the heart of Krishna. We cannot, however, ascertain whether this paper spread its bright lustre all over Bengal in a manner worthy of its name. It was edited by Mahesh Chandra Ghose and was a weekly paper.

### *The Satyadharma Prakasika (1849)*

The name of this new comer in the field of Bengali journalism implies "The Revealer of the True Religion." This true religion, however,

was neither Christianity, nor Muhamadanism, but only a branch of Hinduism, that is, the *Kartabhaia* cult. This cult was none else than another form of Vaisnavism. The followers of this sect place undue reliance on Krishna, who is known to them as the *Karta* or the Chief and they ascribe every act of theirs as being guided by his influence. The aim of this paper was to advocate the principles of this new cult. The attempts of the editor, however, were not fruitful and the paper had a premature death after the issue of the first number.

Before the close of the year the following three papers made their appearance: (1) the *Bhairab Danda*, (2) the *Sujan Bandhu* and (3) the *Janachandrodaya*. The first named paper literally means the "Club of Siva." The most noticeable feature about this paper was that it had its birth in a town outside Bengal. It was published by Umakanta Bhattacharya from the holy city of Benares. Unfortunately it indulged in a fight with its able contemporary the *Rasamudgar*. The fight proved fatal to it, for it had to cease publication shortly after.

It was followed by the *Sujan Bandhu* or the "Good Friend," a paper manifestly issued with the object of establishing harmony in the field of Bengali journalism. The *Janachandroya* followed in its wake as a natural sequence, as the fighters had by this time gained sufficient knowledge to enable them to realise the folly of being engaged in barren controversy.

### *The Sarba Subhakari (1850)*

This journal was the foremost of the papers of Calcutta conducted by educated Bengalis. The tone and style of the paper were very healthy. Every issue contained able and thoughtful articles covering at least ten pages. It contained bright and wholesome articles on child marriage, the education of women, equality among men, the drink question, the *charak* festival and so on. For a short time it exerted a great influence on public opinion in Bengal, but unfortunately it was destined to live for a short while. The editorial charge was vested in Matilal Chatterjee. It used to appear every week and the charge was rather low, one anna per issue.

*The Dharma Marma Prakasika (1850)*

This was one of the short-lived papers, and as such the record seems uninteresting and trivial. We meet with no less than seven or eight new papers in the course of a year, all appearing like so many bubbles on the surface of the current of Bengali journalism and disappearing without producing any lasting impression. The absence of enthusiasm on the part of the public at large is responsible in a great way for the short lives of so many promising newspapers. There was no want in Bengal of capable men to launch a new journals, but as journalism was not a paying concern, the enthusiasm soon began to flag and as a natural consequence, the want of finance brought about an untimely death in each case. A paper of this type was the *Dharma Marma Prakasika*. It was issued neither from Calcutta nor from Singapore, but from Konnagore, a village nine miles from Calcutta. It was the organ of a local religious Association. Its career was also short-lived. No more information can be gleaned about it.

*The Salya Pradip (1800)*

This paper saw the light mainly through the help of the missionaries of Serampore. The authorities of the *Friend of India* and the several other missionaries eagerly lent a helping hand ; the care of this infant was entrusted to Townsend. From Serampore which legitimately claims to be the birth-place of many a journal both in English and the Vernacular, the *Pradip* began to be issued regularly every week. We are rather fortunate in securing the subscribers' list of this journal, which was comprised as follows :—Hindu subscribers 176, European 48, Mussalman 4, Native Christians 2, making a total of 230 altogether. As the management was in the hands of the missionaries, the plan was very well conceived. Not only news, both local and foreign, but also suitable articles on science, history and useful arts found a place in it. Correspondence also formed an essential part of it. Illustrations were always added to make the reading matter sufficiently intelligible, it was quarto size and the annual subscription was

six rupees only. Though the missionaries had kept up the *Darpan* for a long time, yet in the present case their interest soon flagged. With the decline of their interest in the paper it disappeared after a brief though bright career of only a year.

*The Sudhansu (1850)*

To complete the record of the year 1850, allusion must be made to three other papers. Krishna Mohan Basu started the *Sudhansu* with the object of advocating the doctrines of Christainity. The aim of this new comer in the field possibly reveals the fact that the editor was an Indian Christian. His paper was filled with choice articles on varied subjects and contained besides other interesting items of news. It appeared to be the destiny of Bengali newspapers of this period that they should only last for a short time. This paper was not an exception to the general rule and its career covered only a year.

*The Burdhman-Chandrodaya (1850-51)*

It is a happy sign of the Bengali Press, that its activities were not limited to Calcutta

and Serampore only. The first paper from the moffusil was the *Murshidabad Patrika*. Burdwan soon after followed suit and published the *Burdhman-Chandrodaya*. It was inaugurated under the editorship of Ramparan Bhattacharya. Unfortunately, it lasted only for a year.

### *The Burdhman Sambad (1850)*

This paper was stated as a rival of its predecessor. It was, however, fortunate enough in having the then Maharaja of Burdwan as its patron. This shows how much may be done by the leading zemindars of Bengal in the cause of provincial journalism. Instances are not rare, where rich zemindars came forward opening their purse-strings to support Bengali journals. The *Sambad*, however, sank into oblivion as soon as the Maharaja's interest in it waned.

### *The Jama-Darsana (1851)*

The paper supplies us with yet another concrete example of the rapid passing away of Bengali journals from the field of activity. There is considerable difference of opinion as to its place of birth. Some abscribe it to the *Chandrika*

Press, but others maintain that it was printed at a lithographic press in Benares. Wherever it may have been printed we may safely ascertain that its editor was Sripati Mukherjee of Benares.

### *The Sambad Lashkar (1851)*

A cloud of doubt hangs over the origin of the paper. We cannot ascertain either its object or the price of each issue or even of its solidarity. The name of this paper is also apparently strange, it means "An Officer of a Ship." So far we know that it appeared as a weekly and was under the able editorship of one Nil Kamal Das.

### *The Banga-Bartabaha (1852)*

A new departure was made in the year 1852 by a new paper the *Banga Bartabaha*. We may describe it as the first fortnightly in Bengali. The plan followed by the authorities of this paper was that it not only collected all the news available during the week, but commented on them. It was fathered by a few educated youths of Cacutta.

*The Kasi Barta Prakasika (1853)*

The holy city of Benares is still a place of eager resort sought by devout Hindus. The object of this journal was to supply the orthodox Hindu public with all necessary information concerning this place of pilgrimage. From the Hindu point of view the paper was an interesting and entertaining one, but unfortunately no details are forthcoming of the success it achieved.

*The Januarunadya (1853)*

One of the charge against Hindu society is that its laws tend to keep down people of the lower classes. This paper however supplies us with an example of how even a man of the lower strata of Hindu society rose to the editorship of a paper, which was read by a large number of people, including those of the higher classes. The editor of this paper was Karmakar Keshub, a blacksmith by caste. The subscribers had to pay four annas a month or Rs. 3 a year to read this paper.

*The Sudhabarsan (1854)*

As the name implied, this paper ought to have distributed nectar-like articles, but it was otherwise as a daily paper. It dealt most ably on trade and commerce but it was not comprehensive enough. Another characteristic of this paper was that it was conducted both in Bengali and Hindi. The rate of subscription was one rupee a month.

The year saw another journal come into being, the *Banga Vidya Prakasika*, of the details of which we are left in the dark.

*The Sambad Charu Chandradoy (1856)*

We learn from the editorial note in the *Probhakar* that this paper was launched by a few educated young men of Calcutta, who first circulated a notice of the journal and set about gathering subscribers. After a year their attempt bore fruit and the paper saw the light. Its editor was Nimai Chandra Mukherjee and monthly subscriptions were four annas while the annual subscription amounted to two rupees and eight annas.

*The Janna Darpan (1856)*

We gather from the *Prabhakar* that the editor of the *Janna Darpan* was Umakanta Bhattacharya. Though it was a weekly, its annual subscription was four rupees one anna. Some maintain that the paper first saw the light in 1847. Shortly after in 1856, came the golden age of Bengali journalism.

## FIFTH PERIOD (1856-1872)

### *The Education Gazette (1856)*

THE fifth period of the history of the Vernacular Press in Bengal brings us almost to modern times. The first paper to be mentioned is the *Education Gazette* which introduced a healthier tone in the Bengali Press. Happily the Government came forward to finance the venture. When the *Education Gazette* was started on the 4th of July, 1856, the Bengal Government appointed Mr. O'Brien Smith as the editor of this paper and Rangolal Banerjee, a poet of no mean order to assist him. Not only poems but also prose articles by the poet, appeared in its pages. Rangolal Banerjee afterwards rose to be a Deputy Magistrate and was the first poet in Bengal to write in a keen patriotic manner. He taught the people of Bengal to look upon their country as their Mother. His books on *Padmini* and *Karmadevi* breathe a lofty spirit of patriotism.

The *Education Gazette* was greatly improved under Peari Churn Sarcar, who took the charge of the paper on the 3rd March 1866. He used to receive Rs. 300 as pay from the Bengal Government. His forceful writings soon made the *Gazette* a popular paper. He had a good command over the Bengali language as he had over the English. On the month of May 1868, an accident happened in the Eastern Bengal Railway near by the Shamuagar Station. It caused the death of many passengers. As an editor Peari Churn thought fit to publish an elaborate account of the accident in his paper. In one of the issues, he printed these lines : "An accident in the Eastern Bengal Railway." His plain speaking, however, did not please the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal who regretted that the article in question was written without an inquiry into the real facts and was consequently full of inaccuracies. This led to differences of opinion and Peari Churn voluntarily resigned his charge of editor. Subsequently he served long as a Professor of English Literature in the Presidency College. He devoted much time and

attention to the temperance question and wrote a series of articles on the subject.

He was succeeded in 1868 by the renowned educationist, Bhudev Chandra Mukherji. Born of a poor but noble family Bhudev Chandra rose by dint of perseverance to fame and eminence. He devoted much time to the many complicated social questions affecting his community. Under him, the *Education Gazette* flourished to a great extent. He was at first not in favour of publishing poems in the *Gazette*, but being once charmed with the beauties of a few poems composed by Dinanath Dhar, he thenceforward began to publish his poems and humorous stories with greater eagerness. At another time Dinanath Babu composed a song on the Franco-Prussian War which was published; which made the *Hindu Patriot* praise the song in high terms. The poet Hem Chandra also wrote many beautiful poems in the *Education Gazette*. In 1872, there appeared one of his patriotic poems, named *Bharat Sangit*, a poem which showed a genius of no mean order. Narendra Sen, another poet of a high order, also

contributed many poems to the *Education Gazette*.

Under the editorship of Bhudev Babu, the *Gazette* became one of the leading journals of the day and was eagerly sought by the people. His many books on social questions still give proof of his foresight and thoughtfulness and drew forth expressions of appreciation from Sir Charles Elliott, the then Lieutenant-Governor. Bhudev Chandra also translated the Romance of Histories in Bengali and wrote among his other numerous works a history of England. In his old age Bhudev Babu made a gift of one and a half of lakhs of rupees for the cultivation of the Sanskrit language. The Government recognised the good work done by him by conferring on him the title of a C. I. E. After his death, the *Education Gazette* was edited by his son. It survives even to the present day, having up to the present had a successful career of 62 years. Thus it may be reckoned as one of the few journals in Bengali which have been blessed with long life. Unfortunately, in recent years,

the Government have stopped the grant allotted for its management. Deprived of such resources the future of the *Gazette* does not seem very assured.

*The Sama Prakas (1858)*

With the *Education Gazette* and the *Sama Prakas* the present refined age of Bengali journalism is ushered in. The Bengali Press had hitherto passed through distinct stages of evolution. The time was, when the language was unsuited for the expression of the thoughts of many able editors. From its origin in 1816, the Press gradually gathered power and shook off all its past imperfections and deficiencies. The *Sama Prakas* commanded the respect not only of the Bengali-reading public, but also was heeded by those in authority. It is to the credit of the *Sama Prakas* that vulgarity disappeared entirely from its pages. Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar helped in the formation of this paper; being moved by the poverty of Sarada Chandra Bhattacharya who was then merely a student, Vidyasagar resolved to bring out this paper to help him in his

distress. Sarada Charan soon, however, secured employment elsewhere and left the charge of the paper in the hands of Vidyasagar. In the month of November 1858, Vidyasagar left the charge of editing to Pandit Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan. True to his trust Dwarkanath bore the burden patiently till his death. Under him the paper flourished and made an impression on all its contemporaries. Born in the district of the 24-Perganas, Vidyabhusan served long as a Professor in the Sanskrit College. The paper was printed in a Bengali press. For four years, from its origin, the paper was published from Calcutta. In 1862, Dwarkanath removed the press to his native village. He was the first Bengali editor to deal with politics ably and successfully. He was not only well-versed in Sanskrit but had a high command over the English language. Every week, his paper was eagerly sought for by thousands of people. The tone of the Bengali papers which preceded this one was by no means impartial. Impartiality on the contrary was the leading characteristic of this paper,

which enabled it to command the respect of both Europeans and Indians, officials and non-officials.

In 1874, the office of the *Prakas* was removed to Bhowanipore, a suburb of Calcutta, where considerable assistance was received from Kali Prasanna Banerjee, afterwards editor of the *Hitabadi*. Rajendranath Dutt was also appointed to assist Dwarkanath in his arduous editorial work. The following *sloka* served as the motto of the *Soma Prakas* :—

“*Prabartatam prakritihitaya parthiva  
Saraswati srutimathati na hi hiyatam.*”

The editor was not afraid of dealing even with foreign political questions, such as the American War and the relationship between England and America. He also ably dwelt on current politics in India ; even the financial position of the Government was criticised in its columns. The Indigo question also attracted its attention and the editor commented on the conduct of the planters fearlessly. He devoted almost the whole of his time in conducting the paper, so he could find little time to write

books; still he managed to publish the histories of Greece and Rome in Bengali, besides a few other publications. He continued to edit the journal until his death in 1886, bearing to the end all the responsibilities of an editor for a period of not less than 28 years, an uncommon feature in the field of Bengali journalism.

*The Amrita Bazar Patrika* (1868)

It is impossible to give a detailed account of each of the modern newspapers, which have come out in hundreds from the presses of Calcutta and the mufussil. It is, therefore, intended to touch upon the careers of the leading papers of the present age. The *Patrika*, which is now one of the prominent English papers conducted by Bengalees, first appeared in Bengali. The story of its origin is very interesting. The *Patrika* was started by the renowned journalist, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, with the help of his brothers. When Sisir Kumar was scarcely seventeen, the indigo-planters began to oppress the poor ryots, who, unable to put up with their tyranny, rebelled. Early in his life, Sisir Kumar

was enlisted in the service of his mother-country. He portrayed ably the sorrows and sufferings of the ryots in the columns of the *Hindu Patriot* and other papers. His articles soon caused a sensation among the people and roused great indignation against him, but he was not afraid of undergoing any sort of punishment for the sake of his beloved country. This incident proved to him the necessity of launching a paper to espouse the cause of the poor ryots. Difficulties, however, presented themselves in the way. His native village Magura or Amrita Bazar, taken from the name of one of his ancestors, was wanting in every necessity for the starting of a paper. He had not besides the means to defray all the incidental expenditure. Still he was determined to start the paper. His two brothers, Hemanta Kumar and Matilal warmly supported him and all three began the task with a firm resolution to succeed. He bought a wooden press and a few type. With this insignificant material in hand, but with a heart full of undaunted courage, he started his famous

paper the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in 1868. In the beginning, it came out as a weekly, and was conducted wholly in Bengali. Difficulties still further crept in. Where were the printers and compositors to help him? Undaunted, he came to Calcutta and himself learned the duties of a compositor. This remarkable fact is not known to many that he, in the beginning, was not only the editor, but also the compositor and printer of the paper. Often he would plan an article and would go on composing it himself. He persisted in the face of all these difficulties. His perseverance soon enlisted the sympathy of Mr. Mouro the then Magistrate of Jessore and Mr. O'Kinealy the Joint Magistrate of the district.

The circulation of the *Patrika* began to increase and Sisir Babu began to bring all the tales of woe to the notice of the public and those in authority. This bold attitude of his, however, did not please Mr. Westland, who thus wrote of the paper in his report. "It (*The Amrita Bazar Patrika*) is conspicuous only

for its scurrilous tone and its disregard of truth. Its declared circulation is 500."

For five months no trouble arose. Soon, however, a European Deputy Magistrate brought a defamation case against the *Patrika*. The case was conducted by the Government. Many officials were present to watch the proceedings. The case lasted for eight months. In the end, the case was decided in his favour. Unfortunately, immediately after a criminal suit was instituted against him. Through a piece of good fortune, he was again let off. These two cases, however, weakened his financial position considerably. Malaria on the other hand began to attack him and other members of his family. As the *Patrika* had come out victorious in these cases and achieved more fame than before, having the number of subscribers increased, he decided, to leave for Calcutta. Accordingly, in 1871, he came down to Calcutta and borrowed a hundred rupees to start afresh the paper; with the money he bought a hand press. The first issue of the

*Patrika* from Calcutta came out in the month of February 1872.

In a few months he secured more subscribers, for the people took a fancy to the style in which he began to picture the true conditions of the country. The most influential factor in the political field of the time was, the British Indian Association and its organ the *Hindu Patriot* was then under the editorship of Kristo Das Pal. The *Patrika* on many a occasion, took an antagonistic view to the *Patriot*. The *Patrika* began to be more and more popular, as it began to publish cartoons of officials and deputies. When Sir James Stephen compiled the Criminal Procedure Code, the British Indian Association and the *Hindu Patriot* each took different attitudes. Sisir Kumar did not remain silent, he strongly wrote against the Bill to convince the public to what extent their liberty would be curtailed by the Code. Again, on the question of the imposition of the new income tax, Sisir Kumar and the British Indian Association were at variance. While

the Association tried to protest against this fresh imposition of the tax, Sisir Kumar in his *Patrika* warmly supported the proposal. At this time, European juries were appointed in the trials of European accused, with the result that invariably the accused were declared "not guilty" by the juries and set free. This abuse of their right produced a counter-influence. Many protests were heard ; "Do away with the jury system, we do not want it." Sisir Kumar clearly saw, with his natural foresight, the sad consequences that would follow the abolition of this valued right. While the *Patrika* convinced those in authority to introduce an Indian element in the jury on the trial of European accused, the paper calmed the Indian agitators by showing the loss that would accrue should such a system be abolished.

The next question which the *Patrika* had to tackle was the question of the right of Indians to vote in the election of Commissioners of the Calcutta Corporation. There

were those who take the right to be their birth-right," but many had to fight for it. Sir Stuart Hogg was then dominating the Corporation. The *Patrika* arranged a meeting of Indians, who demanded this elementary right. The British Indian Association opposed the movement. The prayer, however, met with the approval of Sir Richard Temple, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. He sent for Sisir Kumar and had a long talk with him. He seemed half inclined to yield but the British Indian Association protested. This led Sisir Kumar to get up a monster meeting in the Town Hall of Calcutta to demand this right of voting. Kali Charan Banerjee, Rash Behari Ghose and others spoke at the meeting. A rival meeting to oppose this proposal was set up in the rooms of British Indian Association, under the presidency of Ramanath Tagore; this meeting, however, was a failure, only two hundred people assembled here, while in the Town Hall more than two thousand people congregated. Sir Richard Temple was then obliged to grant the demand of Sisir Kumar's party.

When the then Prince of Wales visited Calcutta, the British Indian Association collected about eighty thousand rupees, which they decided to spend in illuminations and fireworks. The Indian League of Sisir Kumar and the *Patrika* suggested the establishment of a technical school to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales afterwards Edward VII. The erection of the technical school was estimated to cost about three lakhs of rupees. Within a very short period of time Sisir Kumar managed to raise the required sum ; and "the Albert Temple of Science" was established to perpetuate the memory of the visit of the Prince of Wales. In the case of Malhar Rao, the Gakewar of Baroda, the *Hindu Patriot* took the side of Government and supported it heartily. Sisir Kumar, however, in his *Patrika* took up the side of Malhar Rao and wrote a series of articles supporting him. This made the *Patrika's* name known even to the western parts of India.

So long the *Patrika* appeared both in English and Bengali. At last came the turning

point in the career of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. In 1879, Lord Lytton introduced the Vernacular Press Act to impose fresh restrictions on vernacular journals. On the 14th of March 1879, Sisir Kumar read of the introduction of the Bill in the Supreme Council. He and his brothers feared that the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* would be brought under the clutches of this new Bill and might be confiscated. Sisir Babu at once decided to bring out the *Patrika* only in English, to escape the rulings of the Bill. Where, however, were the types and compositors to bring out the next number? Pramath Dutt, a kind friend of his, came to his help with the necessary materials. All the three brothers were expert compositors and the next number promptly came out only in English. Thus from 1879 the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is being still conducted in English.

### *The Sulabh Samachar (1870)*

Keshub Chandra Sen, the great leader of the Brahmo Samaj, started this paper. In

1870, he founded an Indian Reform Society, which had five distinct branches. To one of these branches was entrusted the charge of bringing out this paper. The *Sulabh Samachar* was meant to meet the demands of the poor people desirous of reading a newspaper. Accordingly it was priced at one pice a copy. The influence of this paper was of no small limits. He also started a monthly journal, called the *Paricharika*.

## SIXTH PERIOD (1872-1916)

### *The Banga Darsan* (1872)

"In 1872," says N. W. Fraser, "the novelist (Bankim Chandra Chatterji) commenced, in his newly-started magazine, the *Banga Darsan*, the monthly publication of his novel of social life, the *Bisha Brisksha*. The *Banga Darsan* brings in another glorious age in the field of Bengali journalism. It has been aptly said that Bankim Chandra taught the people of Bengal to read Bengali for pleasure. Hitherto, the Bengali language was largely dependent on Sanskritised words, and it was, therefore, the learned Sanskrit scholars who could only write books and journals. The language had not yet become the vehicle of common thought. Even the educated Bengalis deemed it a disgrace to read a Bengali book or a newspaper. Those false notions were driven away from the Bengali

mind by Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Himself the first graduate of the Calcutta University, he devoted his life to the service of his mother-tongue and showed the educated Bengali community how forceful and full of thoughts could the language be in fit hands. His *Banga Darsan* created a keen desire to read the newspaper in a monthly form, not only for pleasure's sake but also for the sake of acquiring knowledge. When he began to contribute his *Bisha Briksha* in the *Banga Darsan*, the paper was eagerly and widely sought for by thousands of people.

Before entering into the detailed history of the *Banga Darsan* it is desirable to say a few words about the famous monthlies which preceded it. The paper, which deserves to be mentioned first was the *Vidya Kalpa Druma*. It was started by the Revd. Krishna Mohun Banerji in 1816. The teachings of Derozio converted him to Christianity. He was a great linguist and knew not only Hindi, Urdu, Oriya, Tamil and Persian, but also Latin, Hebrew and Sanskrit. He was conferred with the

degree of Doctor of Law by the Calcutta University. His monthly journal was dedicated to Lord Hardinge, the then Governor-General of India. He wrote in his introduction to this paper that though he longed to translate books on astrology and science into Bengali, he could not do so as he had difficulties to contend with. As the Bengal Government had promised him help he had started the journal to translate various books from English into Bengali.

The great historian Rajendra Lal Mitter started the *Bibidhartha Sangraha* in 1851. He was also the recipient of the degree of Doctor of Law and was a linguist, knowing Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit, German, Greek, Latin and French. His paper was really a mine of information. Commenting on Michael Madhusudan's work *Tilotama Kavya* Dr. Mitra wrote : "A glance at any part of the *Tilotama* will show all the signs of a true poet. Beautiful passages abound in the work."

Another paper which deserves mention, is the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*. It was founded by

Maharsi Debendranath Tagore ; but the editorship, soon devolved upon Akshoy Kumar Dutt. "Akshoy Kumar," wrote Romesh Chandra Dutt, "enlisted himself to the cause of Brahmoism and for a long time edited that wonderfully able religious paper the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*. It is scarcely possible to describe adequately how eagerly the moral instruction and earnest exhortations of Akshoy Kumar conveyed in that famous paper, were devoured by a large circle of thinking and enlightened people." He did not exaggerate the picture when he added : "People all over Bengal awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness and the silent and sickly but indefatigable worker at his desk swayed for a number of years the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of the people of Bengal."

Though the organ of the Brahmo Samaj, the *Patrika* did an immense service to the country. It soon became the leading and popular paper of the time. Discoveries of European science, moral instruction, account

of different nations and tribes of animate and inanimate creation, all that could enlighten the expanding intellect of Bengal and dispel darkness and prejudices, found a convenient vehicle in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*. His articles were earnest and forcible.

On the 1st of Baisakh 1279 B.S. (1872 A.D.) the first number of the *Banga Darsan* came out from a press at Bhawanipore. In the manifesto, issued before, it was announced that Bankim Chandra Chatterji would be the editor, and men like Dinabandhu Mitra, the dramatist, Hemchandra Banerjee, the epic poet, Ramdas Sen, the antiquarian, Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya and Akshoy Chandra Sarkar would contribute learned articles to it. Thus all the leading men of the time flocked round Bankim Chandra. The first number proved a great success, it took educated men by storm. Educated Bengalis had then no idea that any original novel could be written in Bengali, when therefore, they saw him produce *Durgeshnandini* and *Kapalkundala*, they were struck at the beauty, originality and character

sketches found in these books. The monthly instalments of his novels in the pages of the *Banga Darsan* were eagerly read by expectant readers. In this journal, there appeared, *Bisha-Briksha*, *Chandrashekhar* and other masterpieces. For all his literary achievements, Bankim Chandra can rightly claim to be (in the words of Mr. N. W. Frazer) "the first creative genius modern India has produced. For the Western reader his novels are a revelation of the inward spirit of Indian life and thought."

It has been well said by the same writer, dealing with the novel *Bisha-Briksha*: "In Nagendra's love for Kumada the novelist declares that he wished to depict the fleeting love of passion, as sung by Kalidas, Byron and Jaya Deva, and in his love for Surja Mukhi, the deep love which sacrifices one's own happiness for the love of another, as sung by Shakespeare, Valmiki, and Madame de Staél."

After the first year, the office of the paper was removed to Kalikata, the native village of Bankim Chandra. In the *Banga Darsan*, his style was a formal departure from the learned

Sanskritic style. He introduced the more simple and lucid style, which has reached its perfection in the masterly hands of Rabindranath Tagore.

The crowning achievement of Bankim Chandra and his *Banga Darsan* was the sweeping away of all vulgarisms. As a critic he was regarded with awe by many writers. His criticism in the pages of the *Banga Darsan* concerning current literature was scathing and sweeping. Writing on the subject Rabindranath remarks: "He (Bankim Chandra) would never show compassion for what was unfit or unnecessary for the field of literature or what betrayed the least negligence or weakness on the part of another. He would taunt and attack these short-lived writers so severely, that it often appeared as unnecessary severity. This severity of Bankim was the outcome of a noble aim, firm determination and high manliness. I remember, he had to face a host of petty enemies, as the literary critic of the *Banga Darsan*. Hundreds of unfit fellows

envied him and tried every means to prove his inferiority."

Though these unworthy people began to heap abuses on him in other papers he was unmoved. His criticism removed all low mannerisms from the field of Bengali literature and made it the object of respect as it is to-day.

In *My Reminiscences*, Rabindranath has ably described the effect on Bengali society by the *Banga Darsan*. He says : "Then came Bankim's *Banga Darsan*, taking the Bengali heart by storm. It was bad enough to have to wait till the next monthly number was out, but to be kept waiting further till my elders had done with it was simply intolerable. Now he who will, may swallow at a mouthful the whole of *Chandrashekhar* or *Bisa Briksha*, but the process of longing and anticipating, month after month ; of spreading over the long intervals the concentrated joy of each short reading, revolving every instalment over and over in the mind while

watching and waiting for the next the combination of satisfaction with unsatisfied craving, of burning curiosity with its appeasement ; these long-drawn out delight of goings through the original serial none will ever taste again."

Though Bankim's novels formed the centre of attraction to the readers of the *Banga Darsan*, yet no less attractive were the historical articles by Dr. Ramdas Sen, or the scientific articles and beautiful poems by the foremost poets of the age. For three years, Bankim Chandra ably conducted the paper, but unhappily he closed the paper in 1875 owing to a difference of opinion among the writers.

One year after, in 1877, the paper was revived. Though Bankim Chandra took an active part in its publication, yet he refrained from taking upon himself the editorial charge. His elder brother, Sanjib Chandra Chatterjee, a writer of no mean order and of "Bengal Ryot" fame, became the editor. The same tone and quality of the paper were maintained. For five years he conducted the *Banga Darsan*. Chandranath

Bose, who in his youth took to writing English, was won over by the *Banga Darsan* of Bankim Chandra. He began to contribute articles on Kalidas's *Sakuntala* to the paper, when Sanjib Chandra became the editor. He admitted himself that never in his life, except for official purposes, he wrote in English. At this time, Bankim Chandra contributed his famous novels : *Raj Singha*, *Krishnakanta's Will*, *Anandamath* and others. The paper disappeared after 1882.

It was again revived under the editorship of Rabindranath Tagore. It had another successful run under him. Many able writers came to his help and the beginning augured well for its career. When, however, the cruel hand of death removed the publisher, Sris Chandra Majumdar, also a forceful writer, the paper ceased to exist. It was about the year 1913.

### *The Sadharani (1873)*

Scarcely a year and half had glided away since foundation of the *Banga Darsan*, when Akshoy Kumar Sircar, an intimate friend of

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, launched another venture, the *Sadharani* in 1873. After passing the B. L. Examination. Akshoy Kumar practised at the Bar in Berhampore. When the *Banga Darsan* came out, he was one of the contributors and wrote articles and criticised publications in it. When his paper came out, it was for sometime printed in the same press with the *Banga Darsan*. Afterwards he transferred the press to Chinsurah, his native village. The *Sadharani* was intended solely to deal with politics and literature. Before its time, it should be noted, politics was dealt with, but not in such forceful language. Iswar Gupta used to address forceful poems to the authorities, which contained sometimes general complaints. The *Sama Prakas* also boldly dealt with on political questions, but as the language was rather abrupt, it found no favour with the educated public. While the *Banga Darsan* won over the educated public to the reading of the Bengali books voluntarily, the *Sadharani* took its place to satisfy the longings of young Bengal to deal in politics. The main aim of

the latter was, to demand the removal of grievances. It would, like a little girl, weep for little rights. Consequently, those in authority, heeded the petty demands of this paper. The popularity of a paper in those days depended not on a large number of subscribers, but on a approval it received from the Government, and the attention it gave to the complaints and grievances published. The *Sadharani* was very popular, because even the authorities deigned to lend an ear to its demands. Educated people also read it, because it was well-written and literary questions were also dealt with in its columns.

For ten years, the office remained at Chinsurah; but as Akshoy Kumar was constantly attacked with malaria, he had to leave the place for Calcutta. The paper always encouraged novices in the art of writing. Many writers would approach him with their composition, and he would gladly publish them, if they showed any sign of originality. Jogendra Nath Bose, afterwards the founder and editor of the *Bangabasi*, learned the art of editing

under him in the columns of the *Sadharani*. Khetra Mohan Sen Gupta, Harimohan Mukherji and many other writers wrote for this journal as well. Harimohan began to write for it in 1875. Thenceforward, almost every week, a poem or article of his used to appear in the pages of the *Sadharani*. When the *Sadharani* was five years old, it acquired additional strength by absorbing the *Nababibhakar*, then edited by Gangadhar Banerji.

Rai Gangacharan Sarkar Bahadur, the father of Akshoy Chandra, helped his son in the arduous duties of editor. As he was a Sub-Judge, he seldom wrote any political article, but every now and then he contributed beautiful poems to the *Sadharani*. In this paper, a humorous article for some time appeared under the title of *Chanachur*. It contained mainly satires on public persons of the time. When a few people began to praise too much certain divine personalities of the Hindus, Gangacharan wrote a strong satire entitled *Dharam Chand ki Chanachur*, which was widely read.

He issued a monthly the *Naba Jiban* or the New Life. When Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramani began to give a new interpretation to *dharma* or religion, Akshoy Chandra did not like his theory in the least, which was based on science. The origin of this paper lay in his opposition to this theory. The Pandit had then taken the literary world by storm, even Bankim Chandra being won over to his side. Alone Akshoy Chandra stood against him and launched the *Naba Jiban* to give expression to his views. Still, as a literary venture, the paper had immense success. All literary men came to his help, even Bankim Chandra wrote many an article for the pages of the *Naba Jiban*. A few of his books had their origin in this paper. Akshoy Chandra's father, Ganga Chandra, contributed many poems to it as well.

### *The Bhandhab (1873)*

While the *Banga Darsan* was dominating the field of literature, another monthly paper came out from Dacca, the former Mussalman capital of Bengal, under the guidance of Kali

Prasanna Ghose Vidyasagar. This publication also created a sensation among literary men. Many eminent authors encouraged him by offering their congratulations to him. Pandit Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan in his *Sama Prakas* wrote : " As the novels of Bankim Chandra are charming, so are the essays of Kali Prasanna. An article once commenced by the reader cannot be left unfinished." Manamohan Bose of the *Madhyastha* remarked : " Such writings never before appeared in the Bengali language." Umesh Chandra Dutt, an eminent writer, was greatly charmed with his style. He observed : " Kali Prasanna is the Emerson of Bengali literature."

This may sound as high praise, indeed, but it is not far from the truth. The high-flown style, full of deep meaning and the majesty of his sentences may rightly make Kali Prasanna to be compared with Emerson. This forceful style of Kali Prasanna, doubtless, drew high applause from the educated public, but it could not reach the masses, who sought acquaintance with the world only through the medium of the popular newspaper. The *Bandhab*, thus, was

a journal of a high class, to be ranked with the *Banga Darsan* or the *Edinburgh Review*. It chiefly contained brilliant essays from the pen of the editor and learned comments and criticisms on literature.

As we have said before, it was the age of Bankim Chandra. Kali Prasanna, therefore, longed to hear the opinions of the *Banga Darsan* and *Sadharani*. He became a little nervous at the mere thought of offending them, but soon his apprehensions were removed. Akshoy Chandra Sarkar in his *Sadharani* profusely praised both the style and aim of the *Bandhab*. Bankim Chandra also with his natural generosity spoke highly of the paper and remarked: "The style of the editor is beautiful and his power of thinking uncommon." The praise from these well-known personages encouraged him more and more and he continued to please the reading-public every month with a new and charming essays.

These essays of the *Bandhab*, which received the highest praise were afterwards published

as separate books. The first of these was, the *Prabhat Chinta* or the thoughts of the morning. Later on, it was followed by the *Nishit Chinta* or the thoughts of the night. These books were appointed as textbooks in educational institutions.

Several offers came to him to serve in other parts of the province. Once he was asked by the Chief Secretary to the Government to serve as a Deputy Magistrate. He had, unfortunately, to decline the offer, as he feared that with his departure from Dacca, his literary venture would fall to the ground. Again offers came from the Nawab of Dacca, to serve as his agent in some distant place. The offer was courteously declined. At last another came from the Raja of Bhowal, which he could not refuse. The Raja allowed him to return to Dacca, as occasion should arise to manage his paper, he devoting the rest of his time to the Rajah's estate. This, however, proved a piece of ill fortune to him and was the cause of the premature death of the *Bandhab*. Though he brought the Rajah's estate from confusion to order, it was to the detriment

of his journal. A few years after the *Bandhab* disappeared from the field of Bengali journalism. When Bankim Chandra closed the *Banga Darsan*, he is reported to have said : "The *Bandhab* will do what is left undone by the *Banga Darsan*." With a faithful heart, the great journalist tried to carry out the mission imposed upon him by this literary *guru*. The state of mind of Kali Prasanna can be better imagined than described when his favourite paper passed away from the field of Bengali journalism. He wept like a boy at the thought of the failure which followed his venture.

Some years after, on the occasion of the Durbar at Delhi, Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria conferred upon him the title of Rai Bahadur in recognition of the services rendered by him to Bengali literature. While handing over the *sanad* to him, the Lieutenant-Governor said : "But apart from all this, and over and above other considerations you occupy a very conspicuous position of merited distinction in the domain of your country's literature, as the most distinguished of living Bengali

authors. The title of Rai Bahadur which our Viceroy has been pleased to confer upon you, is a fitting recognition of your place in the esteem of your countrymen."

### *The Bangabasi (1881)*

The name of the paper with which even the villagers of Bengal are acquainted with is the *Bangabasi*. The source of inspiration of this journal was the *Sadharani* of Akshoy Chandra Sarcar. Jogendra Chandra Bose, to whom belonged the credit of launching this weekly, after passing the First Arts Examination and after an extensive tour up-country, secured for some time the sub-editorship of the *Sadharani* at Chinsura. Under the able guidance of the venerable editor he received a training in the art of editing, which counted so much for his success in his journalistic career. From a school master he turned to be an assistant editor. After sometime he came to Calcutta and founded the *Bangabasi* in 1881. The credit of making a name for this rightly belongs to him. He planned to circulate the paper to all

districts of Bengal through agents. He gathered around him a host of able writers, namely, Krishna Chandra Bannerjee, Indranath Bannerjee, Debendra Bijoy Basu, Dinanath Sanyal, Sasadhar Tarkachuramani and several others. In the beginning, the founder himself acted as the editor of the journal. Many considered him not to be an able writer, but it was he who built up the fame and renown for the *Bangabasi*. His bright articles produced a good impression on the public. Encouraged by his success he undertook the publication of another monthly paper the *Jannabhumi*. He entrusted the charge of this mouthly to Panchanon Tarkaratna. For four years the paper continued to be under the management of the *Bangabasi* staff. The poet, Nabin Chandra, began his epic poem on "Lord Buddha" in this paper. Other prominent literary men contributed valuable articles to it. Pandit Mahendra Nath Vidyanidhi began, in this paper, a short history of the Bengali press, which he left unfinished. BehariLal Sarkar (now Rai Sahib) wrote many historical articles for it. Thus all the members

of the staff of the *Bangabasi* employed their leisure in writing for the *Janmabhumi*. Another venture, undertaken by Jogendra Chandra, was the *Dainik*, a daily paper of good reputation and Bamadeva Dutt became the editor of it. Soon after the charge was made over to Kshetra Mohan Sen Gupta and the sub-editorship fell upon Behari Lal Sarkar, an energetic young journalist. Two other attempts connected with the *Bangabasi* was the starting of the *Hindi Bangabasi* and the *Telegraph*, an English weekly. Over and above these burdens, there was the book publishing department. Pandit Panchanan Tarkaratna was also appointed to translate the famous Sanskrit *sastric* works into Bengali. All these attempts absorbed his whole attention. Jogendra Chandra therefore gave up the editorial charge and appointed Krishna Chandra Mukherji as the editor of the weekly *Bangabasi*. One peculiarity of this paper was that no one expect a Brahmin was the editor of this paper. The reason, perhaps, was not far to seek. The sole aim of this paper was to defend

Hinduism from the attacks of the reformed classes in the community. It even now puts on a bold defence for the Hindu community and passes as the champion of pure Hinduism. As the Brahmins are the heads of Hindu society and command the greatest respect from the people fittingly, therefore, the seat of the editor was specially reserved for an educated Brahmin. Fortunately or unfortunately, the rule has not continued in force at present, as an educated non-Brahmin gentleman, Rai Sahib Behari Lal Sarkar, still holds the responsible post of editor.

For ten or twelve years Krishna Chandra Bannerji remained as editor. When he used to go for a change for a month or two, the charge would fall upon Behari Lal, the assistant editor. All this time, the *Dainik* was in the hands of Khetra Mohan Sen Gupta. He first came in touch with the *Bangabasi*, when it was only one year old. Since then, the connection has been preserved for now not less than twenty-one years. The help and service given by him, led to the improvement of the

*Bangabasi.* That the brilliant articles of Khetra Mohan increased the reputation of the paper was ever gratefully acknowledged by the founder-proprietor of the journal. He was really without a rival in dealing with political and economic questions. His extraordinary power of dealing with the annual budget of the Government and commenting on the current events in the light of past incidents was admitted by all to be beyond praise. For all these learned dissertations the renown of the paper increased rapidly.

After Krishna Chandra Bannerjee, Babu Panchcowri Bannerjee became the editor of the *Bangabasi*. Panchcowri, a brilliant scholar, began his career as a teacher, but left it to be an editor. Babu Harimohan Mukherjee acted as assistant editor for the long period of ten years. Under these the circulation of the *Bangabasi* began to increase by leaps and bounds. About this time the *Bangabasi* suffered a loss. The *Dainik Bangabasi*, which so long and so ably educated the people in Bengal and satisfied their intellectual desires, died. With its disappearance,

the editor of the *Dainik* was transferred to the staff of the *Bangabasi*, with the entire charge of the paper. Meanwhile Panchcowri Bannerjee had left the staff of the paper. Circumstances, however, changed rapidly. Khetra Mohan Sen Gupta severed his connection with the paper, and Sasi Bhushan Mukherjee came to fill up the vacancy. He was also an able writer and improved the paper considerably. He was succeeded by Babu Dwija Pada Banerjee, B. A. All this time, the founder-proprietor continued at the helm of affairs. His opinion was sought for in all important affairs. The paper suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Jogendra Chandra Bose, who sacrificed his all to see the paper well consolidated and well managed. In 1905, Jogendra Chandra passed away, much to the detriment of the paper. His son, Barada Chandra Bose, is now following in the footsteps of his father and managing with credit all the papers started by his great father.

### The *Bharati* (1877)

This is one of the papers for which the Tagores of Jorasanko are responsible. The story of the

birth of the paper is recounted in the words of Rabindra Nath Tagore : " This was the time, when my brother Jotindra decided to start the *Bharati* with our eldest brother, Dwijendra Nath Tagore as editor, giving us fresh food for enthusiasm. I was then just sixteen, but I was not left out of the editorial staff." It was in the month of Sraban 1284 B. S. (1877 A. D. ) that the first number of the *Bharati* was issued under the able editorship of Dwijendra Nath Tagore. There was really a need for such a monthly. The *Banga Darsan* of Bankim Chandra had by that time disappeared and although it had made its reappearance under his brother Sanjib Chandra, the high moral tone of the paper had deteriorated. There was the famous *Bandhab* of Kali Prasanna Ghose Vidyasagar, but it was too abstruse in thought and pompous in manner and so could not satisfy the cravings of the public. A new batch of young writers then arose round the *Bharati*. These included the Tagore brothers—Satyendra, Jotindra and Rabindra Nath, together with their sister Swarnakumari and another Akshai Chandra Chowdhury. The first number

of the *Bharati* contained many good literary articles including a criticism on Michael Madhusudan's *Meghanadabhadha* by Rabindra Nath Tagore. It was a fierce attack on the poet. Writing afterwards of the unjustified attack on the epic, Rabindra Nath wrote: "A short time before, in all the insolence of my youthful vanity, I had written a criticism of the *Meghanadabhadha*. As acidity is the characteristic of the unripe mango, so is abuse of the immature critic. When other powers are lacking the power of pricking seems to be at its sharpest. I had thus sought immortality by leaving my scratches on that immortal epic. This impudent criticism was my first contribution to the *Bharati*." The paper also contained a philosophic article from the pen of the able editor, who is still known in the field of Bengali literature, for his deep philosophic discourses. A serial novel was contributed by Mrs. J. Ghosal, popularly known as Srimati Swarna Kumari Devi. The novel was entitled *Bhikharini* or the Beggar Woman. The novel appeared in serial form and was finished by the close of the year. Thus from

the very installation of the paper this gifted lady played an important part in building up the *Bharati*, and shortly afterwards succeeded as the editress of the paper. "When the *Bharati*," says Rabindra Nath, "entered upon its second year, my second brother proposed to take me to England....In an unlucky moment I began to write letters about my journey to my relatives and to the *Bharati*. These were nothing but the outcome of youthful bravado". Mrs. J. Ghosal continued to contribute to it. In it appeared her now famous novel *Chinna Mukul* or the Torn Blossom; and several small dramas. The great poet Bihari Lal first contributed his charming poems to this paper. Akshoy Kumar Boral, one of the greatest poets of the day, was also a regular contributor. The editor, Dwijendra Nath, laboured hard for the success of the paper for full seven years, after which he resolved to give up the charge. Then came a crisis in the career of the *Bharati*. Mrs. J. Ghosal happily volunteered at the time to take up this onerous task. Being of acultured mind she undertook the duties in an able manner and in the face of enormous

difficulties. It was a remarkable phenomenon to witness a Bengali lady doing all the duties of editor and manager so far back as the early days of 1885. For 18 long years, she ungrudgingly bore the burden and as such is entitled to the highest praise. In a manifesto she wrote:—"I have undertaken this task to save the *Bharati* from premature death. The former tone of the paper will be kept up; more attention, however, shall be devoted to science, a necessity in our country." About this time, the *Banga Darsan* disappeared from the public eye. The new paper appeared regularly and the labours of the editress were greatly appreciated by the public. The foremost writers of the time helped her with their contributions. She herself was a writer of no mean order. Her serial novels attracted a host of readers. She could deal with difficult and scientific subjects very lucidly; a series of articles on astronomy written by her in her paper were much appreciated; and as a writer of dramas she had scarcely an equal.

In 1898, her two daughters Srimati Hirannoymoye Debi and Srimati Debi relieved their

mother of this difficult task. As the health of Swarna Kumari broke down on account of excessive duties and as the doctors advised her to go for a change, it was decided to stop the paper. The idea came as a shock to her elder daughter Hiranmoye, who first tried to coax Rabindra Nath to take over charge. Rabindra Nath declined, but agreed to help her in every way, if she undertook the responsibilities of editor. She agreed and asked her sister Saralabala to come and help her. Principals Umesh Chandra Vidyaratna and Ramendra Chandra Trivedi, Thakurdas Babu, Debendra Nath Sen and Jaladhar Sen, also helped the paper with their writings. The two sisters, who used to help their mother before, now assumed full charge. Hiranmoye was the composer of some remarkably good poems. If we compare a copy of the *Bharati* of those days with a current copy, we can ascertain the change that has come over the Bengali reading-public during these years. The readers of those days were satisfied with one serial novel or story together with a good number of learned literary and philosophical

articles. The modern public craves for more stories and has a very little longing for learned articles.

In 1898 Rabindra Nath Tagore himself took over the charge of the paper. By this time two other papers the *Sadhana* and the *Balak* had come out from the Tagore's house and had disappeared. The *Balak* was incorporated with the *Bharati*. Many regretted that a literary success like the *Sadhana* should have died so soon. When Rabindra Nath took over the responsibility, he modelled the paper on the lines of his *Sadhana* which had a moral tone and pure style. One of the causes of this prolonged life of the paper was the change in the editorship at intervals. Every incumbent brought fresh blood and so sought to strengthen the vitality of the journal. After Rabindra Nath his niece Srimati Sarala Debi again assumed the editorship. She kept up the high standard which the *Bharati* had previously reached. At this time Babu Dinesh Chandra Sen and Charu Charan Bannerjee helped her greatly. For 8 years till 1314 B. S. Sarala Debi continued to

be the editor. Towards the end of this period, unfortunately, the popularity of the paper lessened. For domestic reasons she was unable to look into its management and her stay in a distant land soon brought about a state of confusion.

Srimati Swarna Kumari again came to the rescue. She gave it a new shape and considerably improved the get-up of the periodical. The *Bharati* appeared in a new garb with numerous illustrations. For six years she laboured ungrudgingly for its improvement and retrieved the good reputation of the paper. She took great pains in selecting articles for her paper and often sat down to correct articles and to put them in a presentable shape if they possessed any originality. She devoted to the last her life to the cause of the *Bharati*. In Bengal where female education is at a discount and which can but point to a handful only of educated ladies, it is more than strange that a lady like Swarna Kumari did manage a paper for about a quarter of a century in spite of oppositions and difficulties. For this she deserves a special need

of praise. In 1915, however, she was obliged to give up the editorial charge on account of her failing health. Babu Mani Lal Ganguly and Saurindra Mohan Mukerjee, B. L., then took up the editorial duties.

*The Sanjibani* (1882).

One year after the publication of the *Bangabasi*, the leading Brahmos of Calcutta issued the *Sanjibani*. On the first of Baisakh 1289 B. S. (1882 A. D.) the first number of the paper came out. The promoters of this paper included Krismna Kumar Mitter, B. A., Pandit Sivanath Sastri, Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra, M. A., of the City College, and Dwarka Nath Ganguly. The aim of this paper was to create a healthy atmosphere among the Bengalis and to combat the great social evils that were eating into the vitals of the Hindu people. In the first number, Principal Heramba Chandra wrote an article entitled "*Chai Bali Phul*" or Jasmine Flowers for sale. In this article he pointed out the moral degradation into which Hindu society had succumbed and spoke of the ways and means to be adopted for the

generation of the community. The paper has always maintained a sober and balanced opinion on all subjects in its journalistic career. It has for its motto the well-known democratic principle "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Pandit Sivannath Sastri, one of the leading members of the Brahmo Samaj, took up the editorial responsibilities for some time. Born in a small village called Majilpur in the district of the Twenty-Four Perganas, he was a convert to Brahmoism at an early age. The son of a veteran Sanskrit scholar Harananda Viddyasagar, he also acquired a proficiency in Sanskrit and English; born orator besides, he could charm his audiences with his religious addresses or moral lectures. He infused a new energy in the management of the *Sanjibani*. His reminiscences which have been published recently give a vivid picture of his literary achievements and should be widely read. After him Babu Krishna Kumar Mitter, B. A., afterwards took up the editorial charge, which he is still ably discharging.

### *The Hitabadi* (1890)

The *Hitabadi* was started in 1890 and is still recognised as one of the influential

journals in the vernacular. It bears still the Sanskrit motto:—

“*Hitam Monohari Cha Durlavam Bacha.*”

This quotation from Bharabi, the famous Sanskrit poet meaning, “wholesome and pleasing advice is very rare,” was chosen by Rabindra Nath Tagore as the motto of this paper. In its early career, the paper could boast to be the favourite journal of all educated people. Its pages were enshrined with the composition of men like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Janneswar Banerjee, Pramatha Nath Mitter and other distinguished writers. Babu Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, B. L., became the first editor of the *Hitabadi*. An astute thinker, the follower of Agustus, Comte and Positivism he exercised a great influence over the Bengali mind. He was for many years the Principal of Ripon College at Calcutta. He was succeeded as editor by Janneswar Banerjee. He is one of the veteran writers in the Bengali language and conducted several other papers. *History of the Word* largely rests on his “History of the Word.” The *Hitabadi*’s days of glory were those when

Kali Prasanna Kavyabisarad took over the editorial charge. Born 1861, he was educated in the London Missionary Institution, Bhawanipore. He first served as an assistant editor under Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan of the *Soma Prakas*. He was also an able writer in English. He was connected with the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* for sometime and himself was the Editor of the anti-Christian and Cosmopolitan. When he lived in the United Provinces, he used to contribute regularly to the *Indian Union*. He was also an equally forcible writer in Bengali. For twelve years he edited the *Hitabadi* with great success. The articles, which came from his pen, were regarded as thoughtful and as such were widely read. He was also a poet of a high order. When Rabindra Nath wrote his "*Komal-o-Kadi*," he wrote a satire upon it called "*Mitha Kara*," which had a wide sale. His satirical tendencies brought him however into trouble. He had written a poem named "*Phul*" or A Flower, and because of it was charged with libel by several prominent persons, as the poetical composition contained false

allegations against a respectable lady and a few notable gentlemen. He was found guilty and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. When the wave of the Swadeshi movement was passing through the country, he strongly espoused the cause. He was a great advocate of swadeshism, and was altogether a man of vigour and enthusiasm. The *Hitabadi* still continues as a paper of great distinction.

#### *The Present State of the Bengali Press*

Before concluding a few words should be said of the present state of the Bengali Press and its future. Any one who stands of an evening in a Calcutta thoroughfare, will be met with the harsh cries of itinerating newspaper-vendors who in raucous tones shout into every passing tramcar, "*Nayak, Basumati, Bengali.*" They form the chief Bengali dailies at present. The most popular of these papers is the *Nayak*. Its popularity rests on the simple but humourous style of its veteran editor, Babu Panchcowrie Banerjee, a brilliant graduate of Calcutta University. Born in 1867 he began his life as a teacher, but subsequently took to journalism.

During the different periods of his life, he had some connection or other with almost all the leading papers of Bengal. His paper caters to the delight of numerous readers even in the distant villages of Bengal. Every now and then a cartoon—though not happily conceived—adds much to the worth of the paper. He is also a popular speaker; and both on the platform and his paper he lends a helping hand to the Government. His labours with regard to the recruiting for the Bengali Regiment have been commendable. He is one who is not afraid of telling the world at large impalatable truths, even when they affect the powers-that-be. The policy of the paper is entirely a moderate one, but it occasionally deals severe attacks when a weak point is found in the enemy's armour, especially if the victim happens to be a sun-dried bureaucrat.

The *Basumati* has as its editor Babu Hamendra Prosad Ghose, B. A. He had the good fortune to represent the Bengali Press in the deputation sent by the Government to Baghdad. He wrote a description of his journey in a serial form

in the *Basumatî*, which was eagerly sought for by all sections of the people. This invitation to visit Mesopotamia by the India Government was a signal honour to the Bengali Press as sealing the stamp of recognition on this neglected section of vernacular journalism. He described his journey "Up the river in Mesopotamia" after the following way: "As one proceeds up the river one is reminded of India. The same blue sky and the same golden shine. The muddy waters of the Shatt-el-Arab flow sluggishly depositing silt. The country is a purely alluvial and dead flat save for occasional mounds. The banks are never more than a foot or two above water level. In April the country is under water. The banks are fringed with a belt of date palms varying from half a mile to three miles wide the country beyond on either side being desert. The first place of importance up the river is Fao. Proceeding up one reaches Abadan where the Pipe Lane of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. Ltd. runs, which like the Suez Canal, has the British Government as its principal. Rows upon rows of oil.

reservoirs, of the same familiar shape as the great drums at gasworks stretch into the desert; along the bank in front stand bungalows, power-houses and resorts for refining the oil, the whole linked together by a net-work of light railway along which little engines run clanking and shrieking." Only recently he was invited by the authorities to visit the battle-fields of France.

The *Dainik Basumati* voices the feelings and aspirations of the masses. One however looks with surprise at the absence of correspondence not only in this paper, but in other Bengali papers as well. Another feature of this paper is the strong defence often made in it for the preservation of ancient Hindu customs and rites. This, like the other Bengali papers, deals also with current politics and the political articles printed show that they are not written by people of mediocre talent; most of these contributions, however, lack the originality and vigour found in the larger and more prosperous English dailies and there is a growing tendency in some of them to substitute vituperation for logical argument.

The *Bangali* has been founded by the Hon'ble Surendra Nath Banerjee. For a long while the hon'ble gentleman has been editing an English daily, the *Bangali* thus appearing to neglect the claims of his mother-tongue. This has since been rectified by the publication of the vernacular paper and it is needless to say that this paper represents the views and ambitions of Mr. Banerjee, though he is not the principal writer. He has a group of able Bengali sub-editors under him, who manage the paper expressing all his views. Its policy, on the whole, is liberal. The leaders published in it show considerable intelligence and education. It criticises the actions of Government, though not often. It has, however, been very enthusiastic over the recent War Loan and favoured military recruiting in Bengal. Like the editor of the *Nayak* Mr. Banerjee also toured long in the mofussil to stir up military ardour in the Bengal villages. It must be admitted that both of their efforts have been crowned with signal success. There is a feeling of antagonism between the *Basumatî* and the

*Bangali*, who keenly watch each other's general failings, to rail on them for the amusement of the public.

Among the weeklies of Calcutta, we have : (1) the *Bangabasi*, (2) the *Sanjibani*, (3) the *Hitabadi*, (4) the *Basumati* and (5) *Samay*. The present editor of the *Bangabasi* is Rai Sahib Behari Lal Sarkar. The chequered life of this gentleman offers an interesting study. He entered the service of the *Bangabasi* of which he is now editor, as an humble compositor, and rose to eminence only by dint of extraordinary merit. The rule followed by this paper was that no one except a Brahmin should be its editor, so he had to remain as sub-editor for a very long time. His education was liberal and he read considerably at home. He steered this journal through many a dangerous crisis. The tone of this paper, which formerly roused grave suspicion in many minds, has been considerably altered. So meritorious are the services rendered by him, that the Government have conferred on him the title of "Rai Sahib," This paper professes to be the organ of

orthodox Hinduism and consequently it is engaged in acute controversy with some of its more liberal contemporaries.

The *Sanjibani* is the organ of the Brahmos. Its views are therefore always liberal and it supports not only female emancipation but also widow re-marriage. Its articles, therefore, have created many enemies. In politics, it is also liberal and claims self-government for the country. Happily, it gives more attention to higher and technical education and generally points to the need of higher social service for Indians. The present editor is Krishna Kumar Mitter, B. A.

Of the *Basumatî*, mention has already been made. The *Hitabadi* represents the more orthodox section of Hindu society. The editorial charge is now with Pandit Chandrodaya Vidyabhushan. Every week, it publishes a column, which is humorously written and is called the Sayings of an Old Man. The humour is pure and graceful. Besides the editorial column, like all other papers, there are many

suitable articles on sanitation, education and other allied subjects.

The *Samay*, is also doing good work in educating the public mind. The editor of this journal is Babu Jannendranath Das, a man of liberal education. The tone of this paper is moderate and the language is of a high order.

Of the monthlies, the foremost are : (1) the *Bharatbarsha*, (2) the *Prabasi*, (3) the *Manasi-o-Marmavani* and (4) the *Bharati*. The *Bharati* has now had a long career running over 30 years. The management is entrusted with Manilal Ganguly and Saurindranath Mukerjee, B. L. Although it has lost much of its pristine glory, the new editors are trying their very best to maintain the former reputation of the paper. The contributors to this journal include many well-known lady writers of established fame. Besides short stories, it contains many thoughtful articles.

The *Prabasi* has a reputation for fearless criticism. The editorial comments form the best portion of this journal. They display

much insight and thought. The editor Babu Ramananda Chatterjee, M. A., is a learned educationist and is a deep thinker. His indefatigable industry combined with the labours of his assistant Babu Charu Chandra Banerjee, B. A., has built up the fame and renown of the *Prabasi*. Rabindra Nath Tagore always contributes beautiful poems and thoughtful articles to this periodical.

The Maharaja of Natore edits the *Manasi-o-Marmavani* with the help of Mr. Prabhat Kumar Mukerjee, B. A., Barrister-at-Law. It contains many of the graceful poems of the Maharaja as also the interesting serial novels of Mr. Mukherjee and has besides various very interesting articles from leading men in the field of Bengali literature.

The late Mr. D. L. Roy, one of the greatest poets and dramatists of Bengal, founded the *Eharatbarsha*, but shortly after passed away mourned by his friends and admirers. The present editor is Babu Jaladhar Sen, who is a well-known figure in the journalistic field. His

short stories like those of Rabindra Nath, have made a name for him. All these Bengali monthlies are illustrated, but the *Bharatbarsha* is more copiously illustrated than the other journals. This does credit to the energy of the publishers. Each number contains not only short stories and serial novels, but many other interesting articles.

Formerly Rabindra Nath regularly contributed to the *Prabasi*, but now he has launched a new journal the *Sabuj-Patra*, which is literally filled by him and Mr. P. Chowdhury, Barrister-at-Law. Rabindra Nath Tagore contributed to it not long ago a series of letters from Japan. His short stories are considered to be the bright gems of the paper. Only recently his interesting novel *Ghare Baira* or "At Home and Abroad" appeared in this journal. The more orthodox section of the Press directed an attack on the moral tone of this novel; the novel has none the less made a new departure in the field of fiction. The style is very simple and has a Tagorian charm of its own. The

psychological analysis of the prominent characters is really superb. The character of the hero represents a true champion as required under present conditions. Mr. P. Chowdhury, Rabindra Nath's co-adjutor, is an able writer. He has a deep knowledge of the French language and of its literature. His *Survey of French Literature*, which appeared in the pages of this journal, is very comprehensive and gives proof of the command he has over that language and literature. His compositions often appear under the *nom-de-plume* of *Birabal*.

He advocates use of the Calcutta provincialisms as the book-language of Bengal. His theory is still causing an interesting controversy in the field of Bengali journalism and has divided vernacular literary people into camps. One is headed by Rabindra Nath Tagore and the other by many of the other leading men of letters. Pramatha Chowdhury along with Rabindra Nath Tagore maintains that colloquial Bengali should find a place of honour and all books should have the colloquialisms of that language as the vehicle of thought.

They desire to have Bengali devoid of Sanskrit environments. Others espouse the *via media*. They consider that the thought should adopt what language is best suited to express it. If the thought be grand and sublime the use of a dignified style is necessary, if it be simple it may be vouched in a simple form but colloquialisms should always be avoided. There is a good deal to be said on both sides of such a question.

The *Sabuja Patra* maintains the doctrine of Mr. P. Chowdhury, and is full of reading matter written in colloquial language. To counteract the effects of this doctrine, the *Narayan* was started with Mr. C. R. Das as editor. The language used is by no means simple, on the contrary it is full of *bombasto furioso*. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal is one of the chief contributors. He, however, does not treat of politics but of Vaisnavism. The *Narayan* may be credited with inducing a few people to pen articles who have seldom hitherto written in Bengali. One of them is Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri. He is acknowledged to be one of the

greatest antiquarians of Bengal. He contributed a series of historical articles on various subjects. His discourse on *Buddhism* should be read with interest by many students of antiquity. Mr. Das, himself is a poet of no inferior rank, often contributes delightful poems to the *Narayan*.

### *The Future of the Bengali Press*

It has taken a hundred years to consolidate Bengali journalism. Many of the papers previously launched were of an ephemeral nature not only because of the weakness of the writers but also because of the want of support the reading-public gave. No one, however, will deny that the present day has been the firm establishment of Bengali literature and of the Bengali Press and with it the establishment of a standard Bengali language as the vehicle of thought. Men of light and leading are now fast taking to journalism and as such are helping to raise the standard. There is less of vituperation, in the columns of vernacular papers, and more of constructive criticism. There still, however, continue certain vernacular

papers that obstinately disregard these healthy principles, but they are few and far between and the people are beginning to show an open disinclination to peruse what in itself, is trashy or libellous. In the years to come there is still a great deal to be done. Bengali journalism has before it the splendid example spread by English journalism not only in England but even here in India. If the Vernacular Press is to be the voice of the dumb millions in Bengal it must cease to be undignified and it must learn more and more to be loyal in tone, if ever frank in manner. It must cease merely to criticise without helpful suggestions. Indeed, this is already the growing tendency among the leading journals in the vernacular and the others are swiftly following the wake. The responsibility of journalism as a means of uplifting the populace must be felt in Bengali as it is already felt in the more modern countries of Europe; once that is realised there is nothing to hinder the Vernacular Press in Bengal being as it is in other enlightened parts of the world, the fourth and most powerful estate of man.